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CONTENTS.

.....	PAGE ix
-------	------------

PART I.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY..	1
Origin and Institution of the Ministry	3
History of the Christian Ministry.....	8
Importance of the Christian Ministry	12
Difficulties of the Christian Ministry.....	16
Obstacles and encouragements of the Ministry	25
Qualifications of the Christian Ministry	32
Methods of the Christian Ministry.....	43
General Study.....	44
Study of the Scriptures.....	68
Special Prayer.....	81
Prayer in the Cure of souls.....	85

PART II.

WANT OF SUCCESS IN THE MINISTRY	91
Causes and Character of Failure; together with the Means of success.....	94
Divine Influence the main Cause of Ministerial success..	100
The natural heart a main Cause of Ministerial success. .	100
The natural heart a main hindrance to success.....	100



THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY ;

WITH

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF ITS INEFFICIENCY ;

WITH AN ESPECIAL REFERENCE

TO THE MINISTRY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT.

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRIDGES, M. A.

VICAR OF OLD NEWTON, SUFFOLK, AND AUTHOR OF
' EXPOSITION OF PSALM CXIX. '

THIRD EDITION

CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE.....	ix

PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY..	1
CHAP.	
I. The Divine Origin and Institution of the Christian Ministry	3
II. The dignity of the Christian Ministry.....	8
III. Uses and necessity of the Christian Ministry	12
VI. The trials and difficulties of the Christian Ministry	16
V. The comforts and encouragements of the Christian Ministry	25
VI. The qualifications of the Christian Ministry	32
VII. Preparation for the Christian Ministry.....	43
SECT. I. Habits of General Study.....	44
II. Special Study of the Scriptures.....	68
III. Habits of Special Prayer.....	81
IV. Employment in the Cure of souls.....	85

PART II.

GENERAL CAUSES OF THE WANT OF SUCCESS IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.....	91
CHAP.	
I. The Scriptural warrant and Character of Ministerial success ; together with the symptoms of want of success.....	94
II. The withholding of Divine Influence the main cause of the want of Ministerial success..	100
III. The enmity of the natural heart a main cause of the want of Ministerial success..	106
IV. The power of Satan a main hinderance to Ministerial success.....	109

CHAP.		PAGE.
V.	Local hinderances to Ministerial success....	112
VI.	The want of a Divine call a main cause of failure in the Christian Ministry.....	116

PART III.

CAUSES OF MINISTERIAL INEFFICIENCY CONNECTED WITH OUR PERSONAL CHARACTER 133

CHAP.		
I.	Want of entire devotedness of heart to the Christian Ministry	136
II.	Conformity to the world.....	144
III.	The fear of man.....	158
IV.	The want of Christian Self-denial.....	163
V.	The Spirit of covetousness.....	178
VI.	Neglect of retirement.....	188
VII.	The influence of spiritual pride.....	197
VIII.	Absence or defect of personal religion.....	202
IX.	The defect of family religion: and the want of connexion of the Minister's family with his work.....	216
X.	Want of Faith.....	229

PART IV.

THE PUBLIC WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY 243

CHAP.		
I.	The institution and importance of the ordinance of preaching.....	245
II.	Preparation for the Pulpit.....	251
	SECT. I. Composition of Sermons.....	258
	II. Habits of Meditation.....	275
	III. Special Prayer.....	279
III.	The Scriptural mode of preaching the Law..	294
	SECT. I. The preaching of the Law—its character—uses—and obligations....	294
	II. The connexion of the Law with the Gospel.....	303

CONTENTS.

v

CHAP.	PAGE.
IV. The Scriptural preaching of the Gospel....	316
SECT. I. Doctrinal preaching of the Gospel..	327
II. Experimental preaching of the Gospel	345
III. Practical preaching of the Gospel..	351
IV. Applicatory preaching of the Gospel.	360
V. Discriminating preaching of the Gospel.....	370
VI. Decided preaching of the Gospel....	376
V. The mode of Scriptural preaching.....	379
SECT. I. Topical and expository preaching....	379
II. Extempore and written Sermons....	383
VI. The Spirit of Scriptural preaching.....	397
SECT. I. In Boldness.....	398
II. In Wisdom.....	400
III. In Plainness.....	414
IV. In Fervency.....	425
V. In Diligence.....	433
VI. In Singleness.....	437
VII. In Love.....	445

PART V.

THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY 453

CHAP.	PAGE.
I. The Nature and importance of the Pastoral work.....	456
II. Treatment of cases in the Pastoral work....	478
SECT. I. The Infidel.....	478
II. The Ignorant and Careless.....	481
III. The Self-righteous.....	483
IV. The False Professor.....	486
V. Natural and Spiritual Convictions..	488
VI. The Young Christian.....	492
VII. The Backslider.....	498
VIII. The Unestablished Christian.....	500
IX. The Confirmed and Consistent Chris- tian.....	502

CHAP.	PAGE.
III. The Visitation of the Sick.....	507
IV. Pastoral Ministry of the Young.....	518
SECT. I. The Sunday School—its importance, constitution, and superintendance.	520
II. Infant Schools.....	537
III. Weekly Schools.....	541
IV. The treatment of the Young in a hopeful state of impression.....	544
V. Young Men.....	548
VI. Practical suggestions on Confirmation	553
V. Sacramental Instruction.....	576
SECT. I. Baptism.....	578
II. The Lord's Supper.....	582
VI. Clerical and Church Communion.....	585
SECT. I. Clerical Communion.....	586
II. Church Communion.....	589
VII. The office and uses of Helpers.....	603
VIII. Miscellaneous	616

PART VI.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.....	625
INDEX.....	653

PREFACE.

THE Work now presented to the Public originated in a letter to a beloved friend upon the interesting subject of Ministerial inefficiency; which, at his desire, and by the disinterested kindness of the Editor of the *Christian Observer*, was subsequently inserted with a few enlargements in that valuable Miscellany;¹ and an impression taken from thence for private circulation. Several applications having been made for its separate publication, the Writer was induced to reconsider the subject in a more extended range, and to avail himself of the suggestions of friends, until the small pamphlet has gradually swelled into its present extended dimensions.

As to the Work itself—the Writer desires to be with his brethren “in weakness, and in fear, and much trembling.”² He is aware that his proper situation, both in authority and experience, is at the feet of many, who are thus constrained to listen to him; and it would be to him a subject of the most painful regret, if he were supposed to advance any pretensions to a standard of zeal, earnestness, or Ministerial attainment, above his brethren. He has not described what he is, but what he ought, and what he trusts he desires, to be; and if, (after the model of the Country Parson) he has “set the mark as high as he could;” it is, because “he shoots higher than threatens

¹ *Christian Observer*, March, April 1828.

² 1 Cor. ù. 3.

the moon, than he that aims at a tree.”¹ He has endeavoured however to write in the first instance for himself; and to point every arrow of conviction at his own heart—“Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”²

The Writer will be found to have dealt rather largely in illustration—not only, as being more suited to his relative situation with his brethren than didactic instruction; but as exhibiting that sympathy of care and anxiety, which gives to us a peculiar place in each other’s remembrance, an interest in each other’s prayers, and a witness in each other’s hearts.—“The same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren that are in the world.”³

The materials for this work have been brought from different departments of the territory of the Church. Though the Writer has had a special regard to the Ministry of the Establishment (to which he is bound by the strongest and most endearing ties, and which occupies in his view the most commanding station in the Church of Christ); yet he would be sorry to refuse a cordial admission, and to neglect a diligent improvement, of the acknowledged excellencies of the honoured men of God in other communions.⁴ If he should be thought to have been too large in his references, he can only apologize by his anxiety to shelter his own statements (which in themselves could possess but little weight) by the strength of accredited authority.

After all, he is deeply conscious, that this most responsible work has suffered—perhaps materially—from the unskilfulness of its treatment. He would desire however to be “accepted of his brethren,”⁵ in a

¹ G. Herbert’s Preface to ‘The Country Parson.’

² Rom. ii. 21.

³ 1 Peter v. 9.

⁴ The Christian spirit in one of the dignified advocates of our Establishment is truly admirable, which admitted the Life of Philip Henry (often referred to in these pages) into his collection of Ecclesiastical Biography—with the admission, that any Non-conformist of superior piety would also have found a place in his work. Wordsworth’s Ecclesiastical Biography—Preface p. xviii.

⁵ Esther x. 3.

sincere attempt to subserve the grand cause, to which they equally with himself are consecrated ; and he would beg to express his earnest desires to be favoured with private communications for the improvement of a second edition (should it ever be called for) ; for which purpose he subjoins his place of residence at full length.

For his work he has no other wish than that of the Country Parson—‘ The Lord prosper the intention to myself, and others, who may not despise my poor labours ; but add to those points, which I have observed, until the book grows to a complete pastoral.’¹

For himself—he would be animated by the concluding exhortation of an eminent Minister to his Student and Pastor—‘ And now, go thy way, O thou son greatly beloved ; and work in thy lot lively, and prayerfully and cheerfully to the end of thy days ; and wait and look for what the glorious Lord will do for thee at the end of thy days ; in those endless joys, wherein thou shalt shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.’²

*Old Newton, Stowmarket,
June 22, 1829.*

¹ Preface to ‘ The Country Parson.’

² Conclusion to Mather’s ‘ Student and Pastor.’

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The Writer, while he would acknowledge the kind reception with which his work has been favoured, cannot but regret, that the shortness of the interval has precluded him from the advantage of many of those animadversions, by which it might have been considerably improved. He has, however, endeavoured to send it forth a second time, he trusts, with some symptoms of amendment, and (in compliance with the suggestions of some kind and judicious friends,) with considerable enlargement, (especially in the detail of the pastoral department) as well as with the result of a general system of revision throughout. The Writer is most sensible of the many defects of the work ; but under present circumstances he has no other course, than once more to commend it to the gracious consideration of the Great Head of the Church, with an earnest desire, that he would accept it as an offering for his service, and employ it in however mean a degree for the edification of his church ; of that part more especially, in whose prosperity the Writer is most deeply interested.

Old Newton,
Oct. 9, 1829.

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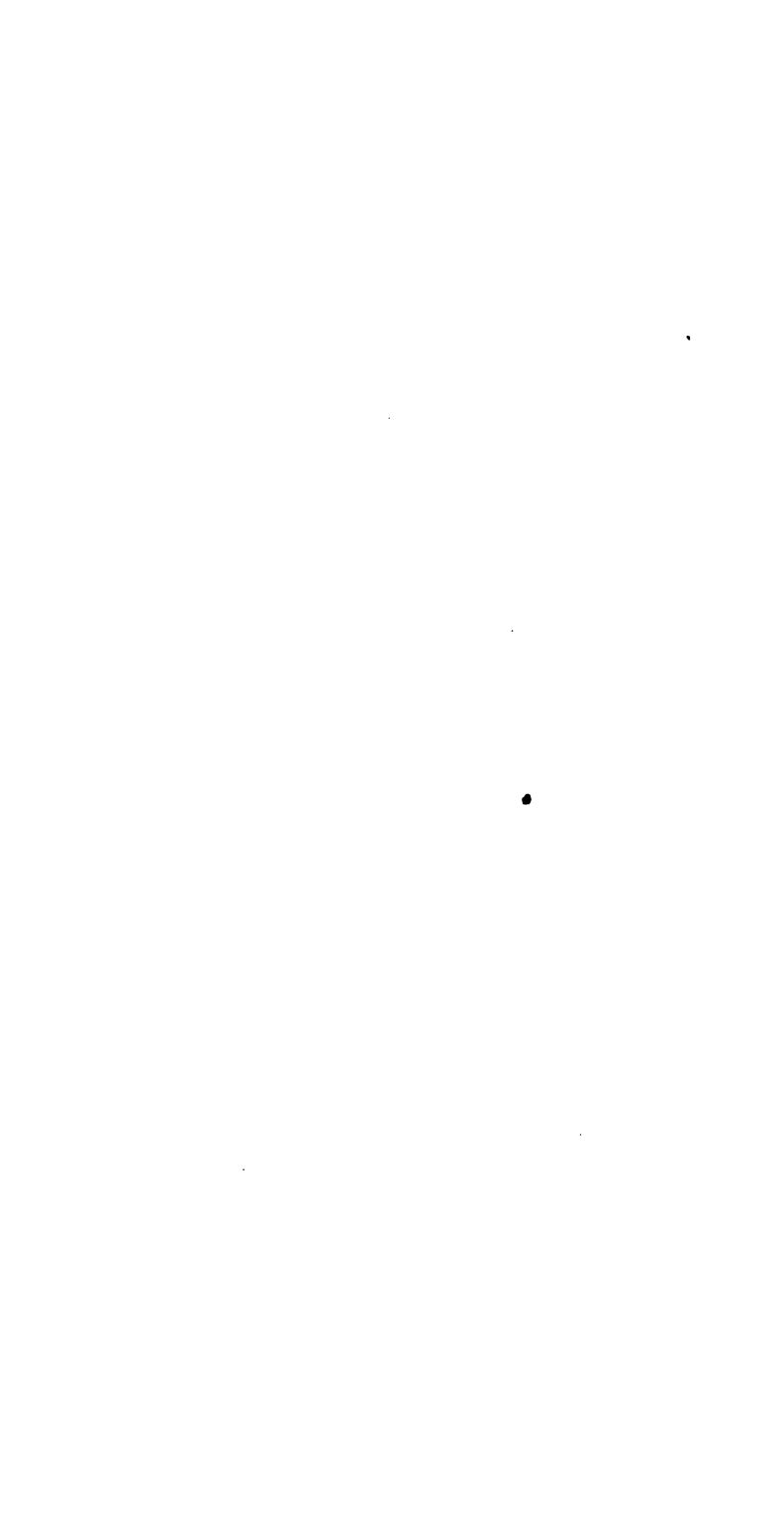
The Writer gladly embraces this opportunity of expressing his acknowledgements to many kind friends, for important and valuable suggestions.¹ He is concerned to have further enlarged the dimensions of his work ; but he was anxious to prepare for himself, and to present to his brethren, a complete manual of our Ministerial responsibilities, privileges, and encouragements ; such as might illustrate the elevated standard of our Ordination engagements, and operate as an additional stimulus to their cheerful fulfilment. By the assistance of his friends, as well as by the time given to him for correction, he is enabled to send forth this Edition with far greater satisfaction to himself than any that have preceded it ; and he has only to add his earnest entreaty, that those, who may be led to the perusal of this work with any measure of interest or profit, would follow it with their earnest prayers, that it may be instrumental to the promotion of the high and important designs of the Christian Ministry.

¹ He would here avail himself of the language of the eminently learned and modest Melancthon.—‘ Let others boast themselves self-taught, I freely confess, that I am daily indebted to many persons for instruction in numerous particulars. To be single-handed is to be weak.’ Scott’s Continuation of Milner, Vol. ii. p. 180.

Old Newton,
Dec. 13, 1830.

PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.



PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND INSTITUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE Church is the mirror, that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene of the display of the Divine Perfections.¹ The revelations made to the Church—the successive grand events in her history—and, above all—the manifestation of the Divine glory in the Person of the Son of God, furnish even to the heavenly intelligences fresh subjects of adoring contemplation.²

The means also employed in the building of the Church are equally illustrative of the wisdom of their great Author. The exhibition of Divine “strength made perfect in weakness” effectually secures the important end—“that no flesh should glory in his presence.” A separate order of men were consecrated to the great work of laying the foundation and raising the superstructure of his Church. Twelve only were included in the original institution, with a commission, bounded at first—within the scanty extent of

¹ See Ephes. iii. 10.

² See 1 Peter i. 12.

“Immanuel’s land;” but afterwards enlarged with a tender of the promised blessing to “every creature.”¹ As the work increased upon them, the necessity for a corresponding increase of labourers became apparent. To provide for this exigency, the Divine Mediator had delegated the power of his own commission to his faithful labourers.²—Invested therefore with this authority, they set apart officers for the lower degrees of ministration, they “ordained elders in every Church,” (who were acknowledged to be “made overseers over the flock” by the appointment of the Holy Ghost)³ and entrusted the same power of ordination successively to others,⁴ “according as the matter might require,” for the continuance and perpetuity of the holy function. This was evidently agreeable to the purpose of God, who had extended the terms of the special promise “to the ends of the world.”⁵ Not indeed that in this sacred institution he has transferred to men his own divine right and honour; but he employs them for his work, as a man chooses his own instruments for his own designs. And, as no instrumentality was absolutely needed, his selection of men as the delegates of his commission, and the representatives of his person, must be regarded as an act of favour; exercising both our humility in the habit of submission to men of like infirmities with ourselves, and our love in this cementing bond of reciprocal interest.⁶ ‘Thus every step in the way of our salvation hath on it the print of infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness; and this among the rest, that men, sinful weak men, are made subservient in that great

¹ Matt. x. 1—6; xxviii. 18—20. Mark xvi. 15.

² See John xx. 21.

³ Acts vi. 1—6; xiv. 23; xx. 28.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 2. Titus i. 5.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 20.

⁶ Calvin’s Instit. Lib. iv. c. iii. 1. Compare Leighton’s Exposition of Isaiah vi. 8. Works Vol. ii. 406, 407, Jerment’s edition.

work, of bringing Christ and souls to meet; that by "the foolishness of preaching" (or what appears so to carnal wisdom) the chosen of God are called, and come unto Jesus, and are made wise unto salvation; and that the life, which is conveyed to them by the word of life in the hands of poor men, is by the same means preserved and advanced.'¹

The Great Head of the Church has ordained three grand repositories of his truth. *In the Scriptures* he has preserved it by his Providence against all hostile attacks. *In the hearts of Christians* he has maintained it by the Almighty energy of his Spirit—even under every outward token of general apostacy.² *And in the Christian Ministry* has he deposited "the treasure in earthen vessels" for the edification and enriching of the Church in successive ages.

The most comprehensive view of this Christian Ministry is given in Ephes. iv. 7—16. The grandeur of its introduction is shewn to have been long before prefigured by the glorious descent and ascent of Jehovah upon Mount Sinai.³ Its original grant and institution is traced to the mediatorial work of the Son of God, who, after coming into the world to "purchase unto himself a Church with his own blood," ascended on high to make this suitable provision for its welfare. His work of humiliation ("descending into the lower parts of the earth") obtained this gift for his Church. The proximate cause of its actual communication was his subsequent exaltation to the Mediatorial throne. The high preeminence of this gift appears in its distributive variety of office ("apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers"); and in the im-

¹ Leighton on 1 Pet. v. 2.

² Compare 1 Kings xix. 18, with Rom. xi. 4, 5.

³ Compare Psalm lxxviii. 7—18, with Ephes. iv. 8—10.

portant end for which it was ordained (the completion of the Church, in its deliverance from various threatened evils, and in the closer union and mutual edification of the whole body “growing up into” their glorious “Head.”) We cannot conceive any more entire view of this institution, nor one that more decisively marks its Divine original.

The subject illustrates the Unity of Will and Purpose, with which the Sacred Persons in the Godhead administer the Government of the Church. From each of them did this holy office originate; “*God hath given to us the Ministry of reconciliation.*”¹ Yet was it also, as we have seen, *the gift of his exalted Son*—promised to the Church before his departure from the earth,² communicated as the first act of his glorious power in “filling all things,”³ and sealed in every instance by his commission conjointly with his Father.⁴—At the same time is this office emphatically called “*the Ministration of the Spirit.*”⁵ It is his authority, that calls to the work⁶—his guidance, that directs in it⁷—and his influence, that supplies the needful furniture of gifts and graces.⁸ Thus do the institutions of the Gospel exhibit its deeper and more mysterious doctrines.⁹ The three Persons in the Godhead are severally and distinctly glorified. The Ministry has an equal concern and dependence upon each, and owes equal honour and service to each. Tracing therefore this sacred institution to the footstool of the eternal throne, with what prostration of soul should we bind ourselves to its solemn obligations! “Mine eyes”—saith the Evangelical prophet—“have seen the

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18.

³ Psalm lxxviii. 18.

⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 9.

⁷ Acts xvi. 6, 7.

² Matt. xxviii. 19, 30.

⁴ Gal. i. 1.

⁶ Acts xiii. 2.

⁸ 1 Cor. xii. 9.

⁹ See Ibid 4—6.

King, the Lord of Hosts—*Here am I*”—was his answer to the sacred voice—“*send me.*”¹

Nor can we wonder to see “the chiefest of the Apostles” unable to express his overwhelming sense of his responsibility—“Who is sufficient for these things? ² Who, whether man or angel, “is sufficient” to open “the wisdom of God in a mystery,”—to speak what in its full extent is “unspeakable,”—to make known that which “passeth knowledge,”—to bear the fearful weight of the care of souls? Who has skill and strength proportionate? Who has a mind and temper to direct and sustain so vast a work? If our Divine Master had not himself answered these appalling questions by his promise—“My grace is sufficient for thee;”³ and if the experience of faith did not in some measure enable us to prove, that “our sufficiency is of God;”⁴ who with an enlightened apprehension, could enter upon such an awful service, or, if entered, continue in it?

But how solemn is the sanction—infinately above all human authority—stamped and engraven upon the sacred office! And how tremendous the guilt of rejecting its commission!—“He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.”⁵

¹ Isa. vi. 5—8.

³ Ibid xii. 9.

² 2 Cor. ii. 16.

⁴ Ibid iii. 5.

⁵ Luke x. 16.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE Divine original of the Christian Ministry has already opened a view of its dignity far above any earthly honour or elevation, and such as the infidel scoff can never degrade. An institution—introduced into the world, and confirmed to the Church, with such solemn preparation—conversant with the interests, and entrusted with the charge, of immortal souls—ordained as the main instrument for the renovation of the world, and the building up of the Church—cannot be of inferior eminence. The office of “fellow-worker with God”¹ would have been no mean honour to have conferred upon the archangel nearest the everlasting throne. It formed the calling, the work, and the delight of the Lord of glory during his last years of abode upon earth; and was established by himself as the standing ordinance in his Church, and the medium of the revelation of his will to the end of time. He has not indeed (as the judicious Calvin has observed)—‘called his ministers into the function of teaching, that, after they have brought the Church under, they may usurp to themselves the government; but that he may use their faithful diligence to associate

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 9. 2 Cor. vi. 1. This association is evidently that of a Minister with God—and not, we think, (as Doddridge and Macknight have supposed)—of one Minister with another. Comp. Rom. xvi. 3, 9, 21. Phil. ii. 25. iv. 3. Philem. 1, 24. Yet “all is of God.” For this co-operation is “God working in us to will and to do.” The strength for the work is imparted—not natural; nor was there any “fellow-worker” in the first principles of strength or in its subsequent increase. ‘Eximium elogium Ministerii, quod, cum per se agere possit Deus, nos homunciones tanquam adjuutores adsciscat, et tanquam organis utatur.’ Calvin in 1 Cor. iii. 9.

the same to himself. 'This is a great and excellent thing, for men to be set over the Church, that they may present the person of the Son of God.'¹ The dignity however of the sacred office belongs to a kingdom "not of this world."² It is distinguished therefore not by the glitter of outward show, but by results connected with eternity, and, in their present influence, productive of happiness, far more solid and permanent than the grasp of men can attain, or communicate.³ It has been well remarked to be 'the highest dignity, if not the greatest happiness, that human nature is capable of here in this vale below, to have the soul so far enlightened as to become the mirror, or conduit, or conveyer of God's truth to others.'⁴ The right consideration, however, together with a chastised sense, of this high elevation, so far from fostering a vain-glorious spirit, has a direct tendency to deepen self-abasement and reverence. Can we help recoiling from so exalted an office—from handling such high and holy things? What! We to convey life, who ourselves are dead! We so defiled, to administer a service so pure, so purifying! "Woe is me"—said one of old, in contrasting this honour with his personal meanness—"for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips"⁵ How can we think of this vast commission—this momentous trust, but as an act of most undeservèd favour.⁶

¹ Calvin on John iii. 29.

² John xviii. 36.

³ The honourable designations of the sacred office are beautifully illustrated in Burnet's *Pastoral Care*, ch. i. Compare also, Chrysostom *De Sacerdotio*, book iii, Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration*, appended usually to Chrysostom, and Bowles' *Pastor Evangelicus*—1655, 12mo.—Pref. An old writer reckons up and expatiates upon no less than forty-three Scriptural appellations of the dignity and usefulness of the Christian Ministry. *Sal Terræ* cap. ii. by T. Hall. 12mo. Francof. 1658.

⁴ Mather's *Student and Pastor*, p. 161.

⁵ Isa. vi. 5.

⁶ See Eph. iii. 8. 1 Tim. i. 12.

But let the *remembrance of this sacred dignity give a deeper tone of decision* to our ministrations—‘a Pastor’—remarks Bishop Wilson—‘should act with the dignity of a man, who acts by the authority of God.’¹—And this is the true Scriptural standard of our work—“As we were allowed of God”—said the great Apostle—“to be put in trust with the Gospel,” (the highest trust that ever could be reposed in man) “*even so we speak*; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”² Let it also connect itself with its *most responsible obligations*—that we disgrace not the dignity—that we live under the constraint—of our high calling—“Ye are the salt of the earth.—Let not the salt lose its savour. Ye are the light of the world.—Let your light shine before men”—are the impressive exhortations of our Great Master.³ “Neglect not”—said the great Apostle—“the gift of God that is in thee: stir it up”⁴ with the daily exercises of faith, self-denial, and prayer. Quesnel observes⁵ —‘What courage, what boldness, what freedom ought the dignity of the Ministry to give a bishop or priest; not for his own interests, but for those of the Church, not through pride, but fidelity; not while he employs carnal means, but while he makes use of the armour of God.’ ‘The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry, our right-arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains.’⁶ But let *the weight of this dignity be relieved by Evangelical encouragement*—The

¹ *Sacra Privata.*

² 1 Thess. ii. 4.

³ Matt. v. 13—16. See an awakening appeal in the conclusion of Bishop Taylor’s first sermon on the Minister’s duty in life and doctrine. Works, Vol. vi.

⁴ 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

⁵ On 2 Cor. iii. 8. Comp. Daven. in Col. i. 1.

⁶ Hall on the Discouragements and Supports of the Ministry, p. 51.

ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness constitutes the chief glory of the evangelical economy. "Therefore," says the Apostle, after an exhibition of its preeminent excellency—"seeing *we have this ministry*"—so richly endowed, so freely vouchsafed—"as we have received mercy, *we faint not.*"¹

A sense of the dignity of our office—accurately formed, carefully maintained, and habitually exercised—is therefore of the highest importance. It elevates the standard of Christian consistency even in the prospective consideration and choice of the work. For what is unsuitable to the Ministerial character is obviously unsuitable to the probationer for the Ministry. In the actual discharge also of duty, the mind will thus be excited to a more solid and devoted consecration; and the whole man will be gradually formed in this heavenly mould—exalted, not elated. Dignity of character will thus correspond with dignity of station. The "office" will be "magnified"² in perfect harmony with the lowliest humility—and indeed never more eminently displayed, than in the exercises of genuine humility; while the man invested with these high responsibilities sinks in the dust as an "unprofitable servant."³

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 1.

² See Rom. xi. 13.

³ The views of Philip Henry were truly worthy of his high office. Thus he wrote on the day of his ordination—"I did this day receive *as much honour and work* as ever I shall be able to know what to do with. Lord Jesus! proportion supplies accordingly." Two scriptures he desired might be written in his heart. 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. and 2 Chron. xxix. 11. And so influential were these views in maintaining a course of deep-toned humility, 'that he laid himself out with as much diligence and vigour,' in a very contracted sphere, 'as if he had the oversight of the greatest and most considerable parish in the country.'—P. Henry's Life, (Williams's Edition) p. 38; which Dr. Chalmers has justly characterized, as 'one of the most precious religious biographies in our language.' Oh! for a large supply of such Ministers in every department of the Church of God!

CHAPTER III.

THE USES AND NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN
MINISTRY.

‘ BECAUSE the nature of things consisting, as this doth, in action, is known by the object whereabout they are conversant, and by the end or scope whereunto they are referred ; we must know that the object of this function is both God and men : God, in that he is publicly worshipped of his church ; and men, in that they are capable of happiness by means, which Christian discipline appointeth. *So that the sum of our whole labour in this kind is to honour God and to save men.*’¹

The Ministry of the word was ordained for the planting and watering² of the Church. The epistles were written to the respective churches, which had been planted by the preaching of the gospel—to supply the place of an oral ministry—to reduce them to church order and unity—to confirm them in Christian steadfastness, and to advance them to Christian perfection. The several individuals also addressed were the fruits of the Christian ministry. Timothy, Titus, and Philemon appear to have been “ begotten in Christ Jesus,” through the ministry of Paul ; as were probably “ the elect lady and her children,” and the beloved Gaius, “ the seals of the apostleship” of John.³

¹ Hooker, book v. 76. The Divine purpose respecting the Church most harmoniously combines these two ends, “ I will place *salvation* in Zion for Israel *my glory*.” Is. xlvi. 13.

² See 1 Cor. iii. 6.

³ See the inscriptions to the several epistles to these individuals, and Philemon 19.

Thus has this Divine institution regard to the continual progress of the church, both in its collective body and in the several states of its individual members. It was given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ."¹ There was not only a foundation to be laid, but a building to be raised. Elementary truths were to be carried to perfection.² Constant superintendency was needed even in the most flourishing churches. The administration of the word was the appointed remedy to "perfect that which was lacking in the faith" of the Thessalonians.³ Peter wrote his second epistle to those that "were established in the faith;" yet "he would not on that account be negligent to put them *always* in remembrance of these things."⁴ For the same reason the beloved disciple wrote to the church; "not"—said he—"because ye know not the truth, *but because ye know it,*"⁵

The general uses of the Christian Ministry are therefore sufficiently obvious. It is the appointed channel of communication from the head to the body in its several members, by which the spiritual life is first imparted, and subsequently maintained with increasing influence of consolation and fruitfulness. Its more specific uses may be readily collected from the various scriptural illustrations of the office—each bearing a relation to the nature of the ministration, and the necessities of those ministered unto. If the church be called a flock, the Minister is the pastor to "seek that which is lost—to strengthen the diseased—to heal the sick—to bring again that which was driven away;" in a word, to shepherd the flock in all the exercises of tenderness, consideration, and care,

¹ Eph. iv. 12.

² Comp. 1 Cor. ii. 6. Heb. vi. i, 2.

³ See 1 Thess. iii. 10, 11. ⁴ 2 Pet. i. 12. ⁵ 1 John ii. 21.

that connect themselves with this endearing character.¹ If the family of Christ be an household, the Minister is "the faithful and wise steward,"² who dispenses the provision of the house according to the necessities of its several members. If the Church of God be a city, he is the watchman³ to wake and warn slumberers of their peril. If it be a husbandry, he is the "labourer,"⁴ to plant and water the soil—to cleanse the earth—to watch the growth of the plant—and instrumentally to bring forward the harvest. If it be a building, he is the "Master-builder,"⁵ to build upon the "sure foundation" lively stones—a spiritual house—"growing into an holy temple of the Lord, builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."⁶ If there be a treaty of peace to be negotiated between the Majesty of heaven and a world of rebels, he is the ambassador, entrusted with "the Ministry of reconciliation;" and praying them in Christ's stead—"Be ye reconciled unto God."⁷

We do not limit the infinite extent and power of the Divine operations, when we speak of the necessity of the Christian Ministry. These uses of the sacred institution are not and cannot be necessary to God, as if he were unable to work without them. But they are such as he has appointed and made necessary in the constituted order of means, for the accomplishment of his own purposes of mercy to the world. His sovereign pleasure has ordained this first link of means in the chain of salvation, so that without a Ministry there should be no hearing of the word—consequently no faith in the only Saviour of whom it speaks—no calling upon his name—no

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 4.² Luke xii. 42.³ Ezek. xxxiii. 7.⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 9.⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 10.⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 5. Eph. ii. 20, 22.⁷ 2 Cor. v. 20.

salvation.¹ It is not our province to prescribe what he might have done, but to mark the consummate wisdom of what he has done, and to exercise the humility of faith, when we cannot discern the reasons of his dispensations. Doubtless he might have instructed as well as converted Paul by a miracle; but it was his pleasure to direct him to a fellow-sinner for the explicit revelation of his will.² The angel also might have been an instructor to Cornelius; but, in order to maintain the order of the divine œconomy, the Ministry of the word was made the medium of conveying evangelical light to his soul.³ This, therefore, is the ordained means of conversion, and of subsequent establishment in every stage of the Christian life; and its necessity must continue, while there is a single sinner to be brought into the family of God, or a single grace in the heart of the saint to advance to perfection.⁴

¹ Rom. x. 13—16. 1 Cor. i. 21. Thus also the destitution of the Ministry is the dark sign of the departure of the Divine presence from the Church. Compare 2 Chron. xv. 3. Hosea iii. 5.

² Acts ix. 10—17.

³ Ibid x. 3—6.

⁴ It is a weighty remark of Hooker's, that 'religion without the help of a spiritual Ministry is unable to plant itself. Which assertion,'—says he,—'needeth no further confirmation. If it did, I could easily declare, how all things which are of God, he hath by wonderful art and wisdom soldered as it were together by the glue of mutual assistance, appointing the lowest to receive from the nearest to themselves what the influence of the highest yieldeth. And therefore the church, being the most absolute of all his works, was in reason to be also ordered with like harmony, that he worketh might, no less in grace than in nature, be effected by hands and instruments, duly subordinated to the power of his own Spirit.' Book v. 76. Mosheim observes to the same purport, that 'the best system of religion must necessarily either dwindle to nothing, or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated and explained by a regular and standing Ministry.'—Eccles. Hist. Cent. i. part ii. chap. ii. 'Not even,'—says Calvin,—'is the light and heat of the sun—not even is meat and drink—so necessary for the support and cherishing of life, as is the maintenance of the Ministry of the Gospel church on earth.' Instit. lib. iv. c. iii. 3.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRIALS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.¹

OUR Lord's illustration of the necessity of a previous counting of the cost in important undertakings, bears with peculiar force of application upon the Christian Ministry.² Too often has the neglect of serious and prayerful calculation given awful power to the temptation to draw back from so momentous a work. No previous contemplation can indeed give any just apprehensions of its difficulties, any more than a spectator of the field of battle can realize the intense anxiety of the actual conflict. Whatever general notions of a serious and intelligent character may be attained, much will yet be left, that experience alone can supply—much that will enforce the exhortation once given by a veteran to a young soldier—"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Thou therefore endure hardness, *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*"³ Indeed the difficulties of this work must deter the considerate conscientious mind from undertaking it with any view to temporal ease and comfort. Many other tracks in life offer a large promise of indulgence. But to this work is most

¹ For some serious and important views of this subject we may refer to Scougal's Sermon on the Ministerial function.

² Luke xiv. 28—30. Erasmus justly laments the evil resulting from this inconsideration—'Verum ad conciones sacras admittuntur, interdum etiam assiliunt, adolescentes, leves, indocti, quasi nihil fit facilius, quam apud populum exponere Divinam scripturam, et abunde sufficiat perfricuisse faciem, et abstersa pudore linguam volvere. Hoc malum ex eo fonte manat; *quod non perpenditur*, quid sit ecclesiastici concionatoris tum dignitas, tum difficultas, tum utilitas.'

³ 2 Tim. ii. 1—3.

especially linked the daily cross,¹ and in it must be anticipated severe and sometimes overwhelming trials, arising from *the professing church, the world, the power of Satan, and ourselves.*

Our *relation to the professing church* is associated with no common difficulties. How instructive are the deep views of the apostolical Eliot on this work. 'He looked upon the conduct of a church,' as his biographer (Cotton Mather) informs us, 'as a thing attended with so many difficulties, temptations, and humiliations, as that nothing but a call from the Son of God could have encouraged him unto the susception of it. He saw that flesh and blood would find it no very pleasant thing to be obliged unto the oversight of a number, that by a solemn covenant should be listed among the volunteers of the Lord Jesus Christ ;² that it was no easy thing to feed the souls of such a people, and of the children and the neighbours, which were to be brought into the same sheep-fold with them ; to bear their manners with all patience, not being by any of their infirmities discouraged from teaching of them, and from watching and praying over them ; to value them highly as the flock which God purchased with his own blood, notwithstanding all their miscarriages ; and in all to examine the rule of scripture for the warrant of whatever shall be done ; and to remember the day of judgment, wherein an account must be given of all that has been done. It was herewithal his opinion (as the great Owen expresses it) that notwithstanding all the countenance

¹ 'Evangelium Christi sincerè prædicantibus nunquam de est cruz.' Erasm. The Apostle connects endurance of affliction with the work of an evangelist. 2 Tim. iv. 5. See Daven. in Col. i. 24, 29.

² Alluding to the congregational form of church government and union, which was most prevalent in America in Eliot's time.

that is given to any church by the public magistracy, yet whilst we are in this world, those who will faithfully discharge their duty as Ministers of the gospel shall have need to be prepared for sufferings; and it was in a sense of these things that he gave himself up to the sacred Ministry.¹ We need scarcely remark, what dexterity of application, diligence of labour, “discerning of spirit,”² how large a portion of “the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” of his yearning compassion, and persevering self-devotedness, is here required! Except we realize a high estimation of the Church, the constraining influence of the Saviour’s love, and the upholding prop of Almighty grace, what is there to preserve us from sinking in despondency?

Perhaps, however, the heaviest weight of trial consists in the awful apprehension of eventually becoming an occasion of aggravated condemnation to our people.³ How affecting is the thought that our Ministry hardens and kills, as well as softens and quickens; that we are set, like our Divine Master, “for the fall and rising again of many in Israel!” To the one we are “the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.” It was the recollection

¹ Mather’s *Magnalia*—History of New England, book iii. pp. 183, 184.

² *Nunc si reputemus in eodem populo, quanta sit varietas sexuum, ætatum, conditionis, ingeniorum, opinionum, vitæ, institutionis, consuetudinis, quantâ oportet esse præditum prudentiâ ecclesiastem, cui sit temperanda oratio!*—*Erasmii Ecclesiastes*, p. 36.

³ ‘Since I was ordained,’—says Mr. Brown, of Haddington—‘I know not how often it hath been heavy to my heart to think how much this scripture (Isa. vi. 9, 10) hath been fulfilled in my ministry. Frequently I have had an anxious desire to be removed by death from becoming a plague to my poor congregation. Often, however, I have tasken myself, and have considered this wish as my folly, and begged of the Lord, that, if it was not for his glory to remove me by death, he would make me successful in my work.’ *Life and Remains*, p. 18.

of this fearful responsibility, that forced from the Apostle the exclamation—(and what Christian Minister but sympathizes in the burden ?)—“Who is sufficient for these things ?”¹ Who that has not realized the terrors of hell, and the glories of heaven, can be duly furnished for a work so deeply connected with the eternal world ?

From the difficulties with the world—unfaithfulness to our Master furnishes the only “way of escape.” The subject-matter of our commission is truth, that comes into immediate contact with latent and deep-rooted prejudices. The strongest feelings of a proud nature are brought into constant play against our unwelcome tale : so that we “become the enemy,” instead of the friend, of our fellow-sinners, “because we tell them the truth.”² The sacrifices, which in our Master’s name we demand of the cherished objects of misplaced affections ; the exhibition of heavenly pleasures, (far nobler in their character, and more permanent in their enjoyment, yet most distasteful to the natural mind) ; the certain endurance of reproach in the service of the Gospel—these component parts of our commission, even from the voice of the most alluring charmer, excite the enmity of the carnal mind to our message, and to the messenger for his work’s sake.³ Does our personal experience furnish no recollections of the mighty influence of this innate indisposition to the Gospel, and of the peculiar wisdom, patience, and faithfulness needed for its subjugation ?

But sometimes the difficulties from the world are

¹ Luke ii. 34. 2 Cor. ii. 16.—Luther entered deeply into the feelings of the Apostle—‘Etsi jam senex, et in concionando exercitus sum, tamen timeo, quoties suggestum conscendo.’

² Gal. iv. 16.

³ Rom. viii. 7. John iii. 19, 20, with 1 Kings xxii. 8. ‘Prædicare nihil aliud est, quam derivare in se furorem mundi.’ Luther.

of a different character. We may come to them "as a lovely song of one that playeth well upon an instrument." Their enmity, though not radically subdued, may be restrained, and even clothed with much of outward courtesy. To meet this aggravated difficulty with gentleness, and yet to detect and uncover the evil, requires a rare combination of firmness, wisdom, and consideration. To risk the almost certain consequence of a change of feeling towards us, demands the exercise of much prayer and faith. The kindness of the world is far more formidable than its enmity. Many, who would have been ready to stem the torrent of its opposition, have yielded with compromising indulgence to its paralyzing kindness.

Difficulties must also be expected *from the restless and subtle activity of the tempter*. Apart from that baneful influence, by which (as we shall afterwards shew¹) he obstructs the general efficiency of the work—his power over the tone of the Minister's mind is most distressing. Often indeed does he succeed in unhinging his spirit, and paralyzing his exertions by diverting his mind from the main design, or by bringing the dark cloud of unbelief over his soul, so that the Ministration of the Church, as Calvin observes—"is not an easy and indulgent exercise, but a hard and severe warfare, where Satan is exerting all his power against us, and moving every stone for our disturbance."²

But after all—the greatest difficulties *derive their origin and power from ourselves*. The spiritual character of our employment—no more than secular occupations—exempts us from the conflict with our corruptions. It is not easy to overcome our natural

¹ Part II. chapter iv.

² Calvin on 2 Cor. xi. 23.

love of ease, our indisposition to self-denying devotedness, and our false tenderness in flinching from the declaration of unpalatable truths. Were we angels by nature as well as by office, the difficulty would be of little account. But, while we bear upon us the marks of our apostacy, we cannot advance without a constant and sometimes most painful effort.¹ Many circumstances from this exciting tendency materially increase the difficulty. We must labour when our hearts are in a cold and languid state. Hence the danger, lest the powerful energy of the word should be weakened in its application to ourselves, lest we should gradually lose our relish for our work, excuse ourselves from its self-denying exercises, and sink into heartless despondency. A course of opposition also to our message may stir up a selfish unhumiliated spirit. Popularity is yet more dangerous. The few, who escape its influence unhurt, have been exercised in painful conflicts, such as have shewn their deliverances from this fiery trial to have been nearly miraculous. Symptoms of success, unless tempered with personal abasement and habitual watchfulness, excite to self-confidence. The want of these tokens, on the other hand, is too often accompanied with impatience, or despondency : so that—assaulted at the extreme

¹ 'When a Minister, deeply impressed with the important difficulty of his work, looks into his own heart, to explore the resources with which he is furnished for so difficult a service, there, alas! he meets with little, that does not serve to increase his sense of weakness, and to confirm his fears. For it must be remembered, that he is a man of like passions with his flock, inheriting a body of corruption;—that he is perhaps deficient in ability—perhaps unfortunate in the natural constitution of his mind—that at all events he has to struggle with infirmities, is exposed to temptations, has more to accomplish than others, as well as greater difficulties to surmount; and that, whilst more will be expected from him, in himself he may have no resources above those of his congregation.' Venn's Sermons, vol. i. p. 9.

put to a severe and searching trial ; and with all its dignity of character and principles of encouragement we are made to feel, that “ if a man desires the office, he desires ” a toilsome and self-denying, as well as “ a good work.”¹ We must work, like Nehemiah and his men, with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other.² The progress of the work would be stopped by the laying down of the trowel. The enemy would gain a temporary advantage by the sheathing of the sword. Nothing therefore remains but to maintain the posture of resistance in dependance upon our wise Master-builder, and the Captain of our salvation—waiting for our rest, our crown, our home. Not indeed that we can complain of a dispensation, so obviously fraught with important blessings to our own souls, and subservient to the best ends of the Ministry. The discipline of the cross is most needful to repress the over-weaning confidence of presumption ; to establish an habitual dependence on the Divine promises ; to prove the power of faith, the privileges of prayer, and the heavenly support of the word of God ; and to furnish us with “ the tongue of the learned ; ” that from our own experience of the difficulties and supports of the Christian warfare we “ should know how,” after our Master’s example, “ to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”³ Yet in our contact with Ministerial difficulty the enlivening views of faith are most important. Conscientious helplessness sinks under the depressing weight

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 1. ‘ Opus non dignitatem ; laborem non delicias.’—Jerome. ‘ The sacred Ministry is not a state of idleness or of delight ; but a holy warfare, in which there are always toils and fatigues to be endured. Whoever is not resolved courageously to maintain the interests of Jesus Christ, and to labour continually to enlarge his kingdom, is not fit for this warfare.’—Quesnel on 1 Tim. i. 18.

² Neh. iv. 17.

³ Isa. l. 4.

of responsibility. Faith links our weakness in immediate connexion with the promises of Divine aid;¹ and enables us to say to the mountain of difficulty—"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."² Thus discouragements, properly sustained and carefully improved, become the most fruitful sources of eventual encouragement in the Christian Ministry; while love to our work bears us on above all our difficulties.³

CHAPTER V.

THE COMFORTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

IT is of the utmost importance to grasp the whole compass of the Christian Ministry. The view of one side only of the prospect (whichever side that may be) must necessarily give an imperfect and inaccurate representation. Painful and habitual experience constrains us to be with our people "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."⁴ The opposition of the world—the inconstancy of the wavering—the inconsistency of the mere professor—the difficulties, that beset the inquirer's path—our frequent disappointments with the hopeful—combined with the recollection of what we are—what we ought to be—and what we ought to do—all this fearfully acts upon our weakness and depravity. Did we carry on "the warfare at our own charges,"⁵ we should "be pressed

¹ Such as Exodus iv. 10—12. Jer. i. 6—10. Matt. xxviii. 20. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

² Zech. iv. 6.

³ 'Magnum opus omnino et arduum conamur: sed nihil difficile amanti puto.' Cicero.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 3.

⁵ 1 Cor. ix. 7.

out of measure, above strength.”¹ But such are “the contradictions meeting in our employ;” that, though it is a sorrow, it is yet “a sorrow full of joy.”² “Temptations” indeed “take us, besides such as are common to man.” We have a painful pre-eminence above our fellow Christians in bearing a double share of “the burden and heat of the day.” But if “the sufferings of Christ abound in us, our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”³

The grounds of support and encouragement are fully commensurate with the momentous difficulty of the work. How *encouraging is the recollection of our office, as the ordinance of Christ, and as the standing proof of his love to his Church.* For will he not honour his own institution, and secure its appointed end in the glory of his name and the happiness of his Church? Will not he that sent us furnish us for our work? May we not plead his ordinance, as the ground of dependence upon him for all needful assistance and encouraging acceptance?

*Nor is our work to be measured by the feeble resources of human agency, but by the Almighty power of the Spirit of God.*⁴ Did we depend upon the energy of mere moral suasion, we should cry out in

¹ 2 Cor. i. 8.

² See an exquisite hymn on Ministerial Experience in the Olney Collection, Book ii. 26.

³ 2 Cor. i. 5.

⁴ Witsius's spirit on entering upon the duties of his Professorship was full of encouragement—‘Quidni ergo jucundissima mihi illa Domini verba applicem, quibus servum suum Josuam quondam affatus est? ‘Nonne ego precepi tibi? Confirmare igitur et fortis esto; quia tecum est Dominus Deus tuus quocunque iveris.’ Licet infirmitatis me meæ conscientia anxium reddat, reficit tamen Divinæ gratiæ, nunquam suos deserentis, ad sustentandum prompta facilitas—illius autem gratiæ, cui lubitum est virtutem suam in infirmitate confirmare, quæque abjectissimis sæpe et rei gerendæ minime idoneis instrumentis utitur, ut totius operis gloria in solidum ac illibata sibi remaneat.’ Oratio De Verbo Theologo. Misc. Sacra, ii. 851, 852.

the prostration, not of conscious feebleness, but of heartless despondency—"Who is sufficient for these things?" But the assurance, that our Ministration is that "of the New Testament—not of the letter, but *of the Spirit*"—sustains us under all apprehended difficulties, with most cheering prospects of success.¹ "The life-giving Spirit" employs our Ministry as the vehicle of conveying his Divine influence "to open the blind eyes," and to quicken the spiritually dead. And to have his Divine seal to our work, as the honoured instruments of communicating the life of God, with all its attendant privileges, to the soul of man; cannot but bring with it a reflex delight of the most exalted character.²

The *blessed fruits of the Ministry in winning sinners to Christ, and stamping his holy image upon their hearts, are most refreshing.* The subsequent walk also of this renewed people in the faith, hope, and love of the Gospel, forms our ground of unceasing thanksgiving to God, our chief joy, and the very life of our life. "We have no greater joy, than to

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

² 'I will remind you,'—says Cotton Mather—'that one of the greatest personages (an Archbishop and a Lord-Keeper) in the English nation (Archbishop Williams) once uttered this memorable speech. 'I have passed through many places of honour and trust both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England, for seventy years before: but were I assured, that by my preaching I had converted but one soul unto God, I should herein take more comfort than in all the honours and offices that have ever been bestowed upon me.' You are entering upon a work, that will keep you continually in the way of this incomparable satisfaction; and I hope. . . . that the saving, or enlightening and edifying, of one soul at any time, will be a matter of more joy unto you, than if all the wealth of Ophir should flow in upon you.' Mather's Student and Pastor, pp. 159, 160. The Christian Pastor—as Bowles remarks—would readily make with the hireling the compact of the king of Sodom with Abraham,—"Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself." (Gen. xiv. 21.) Lib. iii. c. 9.

hear that our children walk in truth.”¹ We turn to them in the expression of parental anxiety and delight—“Now we live, *if ye stand fast in the Lord.*”²

The interest we possess in the affectionate sympathies of a beloved people is also a subordinate source of comfort and encouragement. Here we find a full compensation for the scorn of an ungodly world, and the secret spring of many an hour of support and enjoyment, by which we are carried forward in our painful course. The Christian and intelligent part of our flock well know, that we are “men of like passions with themselves,” that our path is strewn with snares, and our hearts are keenly wounded with sorrow and temptation. Christian sympathy engages them to “communicate with our affliction.” A sense of duty and privilege calls forth their exertions, and directs their conduct so that, as far as possible, all just grounds of complaint or grief may be removed; and our labours for their sakes, and in their service made consoling to our own souls.³ Our debt of obligation to the secret expressions of their love at the throne of grace is reserved among the discoveries of the great day, to add dignity and emphasis to the acknowledgment now made “in part,” and then to be more fully proclaimed; that “we are their rejoicing, even as they also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.”⁴

¹ 2 John 4.

² 1 Thess. iii. 7—9.

³ Quesnel thus beautifully expresses the mutual relation between the Pastor and the people—“The latter ought to alleviate the troubles which attend the pastoral function, by a filial respect, “obedience and fear.” The former ought to make a suitable return on all occasions by his care, and continually to cherish the flock by fresh testimonies of satisfaction, joy, and tenderness.” On 2 Cor. vii. 15, 16. Also on 2 Cor. ii. 3. Phil. ii. 26.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 14.

Another comfort and encouragement of the Ministry, of a more individual character, deserves to be mentioned—*its special advantages for the cultivation of personal religion.*¹ Such is the deadening influence of secular callings upon the concerns of eternity, that without special exercises of watchfulness and prayer the Christian cannot maintain his high elevation.² Often did the “man after God’s own heart” —when engrossed with the cares of his kingdom— seem to envy the Ministers of the sanctuary their peculiar privilege of a nearer approach to their God, and a constant abidance in his work.³ And what exercised Christian does not mourn over the necessary secularities of his calling, as abridging him of his spiritual enjoyments; and distracting even those seasons, which, by the active habit of self-denial, he is enabled to consecrate to communion with his God? It is so difficult to be *employed*, without being “*entangled*, with the affairs of this life;”⁴ there are so many weeds of a worldly growth and of rank luxuriance, “choking the word,” when it has given fair promise of fruit, and is even advancing “to per-

¹ See this clearly illustrated by Bishop Burnet—Pastoral Care, ch. viii. Mr. Boston, the well-known author of ‘The Fourfold State,’ dates his earliest thoughts and desires of the Ministry from the consideration—‘because of all men Ministers were most taken up about spiritual things.’ ‘Is it not our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and honourable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling is a kind of living in heaven; and, besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own?’ Leighton’s Letter to the Clergy of Dumblane. Compare also his Works, ii. 452. We shall afterwards, (Part iii. ch. viii.) be led to remark upon the peculiar hindrances arising from this source. Yet these—be it remembered—are the workings of temptation acting upon a corrupt nature; while the direct tendency of a spiritual function must be the advancement of spiritual religion in the heart.

² Compare Psalm cxix. 25, with Isa. xl. 31.

³ Compare Psalm lxxv. 4; lxxxiv. 4.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 4.

section,"¹ that the comparative freedom from these embarrassing hindrances is not among the least of the privileges of the Christian Ministry. Add to this—while secular occupations have a tendency to divert us from God, this holy employ naturally draws us to him. In calling us to the search of the rich mines of Scripture, to heavenly contemplation, and spiritual devotedness, it furnishes the appointed means for the salvation of our own souls; so that "he that watereth is watered also himself."² And thus—the devotion of time, the concentration of attention, and the improvement of talents and opportunities—when applied in simplicity to that employment, which is the present and eternal rest of the soul, forms and matures the character for a richer supply of heavenly communications, and for more extensive usefulness in the Church of God.

We remark also the *confirmation, afforded to our own faith by the daily routine of a spiritual ministration.* The palpable display of the blindness and enmity of the natural man—the necessity of a radical change of heart and habit—the means by which this change is effected—its beneficial influence upon the whole character—its sustaining efficacy, as manifested in "the patience and faith of the saints"—all meet us on every side in our closer and more familiar survey of man; strengthening our personal faith in Divine revelation, and enabling us to set our seal with stronger confidence, that in our official testimony "we have not followed cunningly-devised fables."³

But it is the *prospect of eternity,* that consummates

¹ Luke viii. 14.

² Prov. xi. 25.

³ 2 Pet. i. 16.—See this point admirably drawn out in a somewhat varied view in the Bishop of Chester's interesting sermons on the Christian Ministry, pp. 37—44.

the encouragements of the Christian Ministry. Then indeed will the Divine aphorism be fully illustrated—"He that winneth souls is wise"—when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."¹—Thus the recompense of the Christian Minister—though only the instrument of the divine purpose, and the organ of Almighty agency—is as rich and full, as if the glory of the work were his own. What clearer proof is needed, that the rewards of the Gospel dispensation are of "grace and not of debt"—the indulgence of the free mercy of God—wholly irrespective of man's desert—which, were its claims insisted upon—instead of exalting him to the Divine favour—would cover him with "shame and everlasting contempt?"

Admitting, therefore, that we are called to difficult and costly service; yet have we abundant cause to be satisfied with the sustaining support and consolation provided for every emergency. All indeed may be included in the single promise—"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."² 'The officers he employs, in every age, are entitled to this treasure, as well as those of the first age.—Keep your mind believingly attentive to this "*always*"—*Lo, I am with you*, to qualify and succeed you in whatever work I call you to. "*Lo, I am with you*," to comfort you by my presence and Spirit, when your hearts are grieved." "*Lo, I am with you*," to defend and

¹ Prov. xi. 30. Dan. xii. 3. 1 Pet. v. 4. For a magnificent view of the glory of the Ministerial crown, see Hall's Sermon on the Discouragements and Supports, &c. pp. 51—53.

² Matt. xxviii. 20.

and "differences of administration" of the same gifts, under "the same Spirit and the same Lord."¹ But under all circumstances, the Divine call to this sacred office will be evidenced by a supply of competent qualifications for its discharge.

In "considering the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,"² we witness a most harmonious combination of seemingly opposite characteristics. The Ministry of our Lord was distinguished by the dignity of God, and the sympathy of a man and a brother—by the authority of the commissioned delegate of his Father, and yet by the humility of a servant, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."³ If "he spake as one having authority," yet were they "gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," tempered with "the meekness of wisdom" and "the gentleness" of love. Indeed the several features of his Ministerial character furnish the most accurate standard of our official qualifications, and the most explicit directory for every exercise of public or private Ministration. But, lest we should despond in our infinite remove from this standard of perfection, let us mark the Apostolic Ministry, as administered by "men of like passions with ourselves," and yet, by the grace of their Divine Master, following closely in his steps. A rich treasure of instruction will be found in an attentive perusal of the Acts of the Apostles. The Epistles will also furnish a complete portraiture of the character, no less than a comprehensive system of the doctrines of the Christian Ministry. The different traits of St. Paul's ministry—as they break forth in the natural flow of his writings, and the brief sketches which he occasionally intersperses—

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5.² Heb. iii. 1.³ Matt. xx. 28.

embody the various particulars of his invaluable didactic instructions. Quesnel has drawn out no less than thirty-three individualities of the sacred character from a single chapter.¹ The incidental mention of Epaphroditus introduces some of the primary qualifications for the sacred work. Paul speaks of him as his "brother"—a sincere Christian. He marks his sympathy, diligence, and perseverance, as his "fellow-labourer;" his "endurance of hardness" as his "fellow-soldier;" his tender attachment to his flock, in longing to relieve them from needless anxiety on his account; and his high estimation of his Master's work, as dearer to him than life itself.²

In taking a general view of Ministerial qualifications, we must remark—that, if the Ministry be a spiritual work, a corresponding *spiritual character* seems to be required in its administrators. Whatever be the value of human literature in a Minister; unconnected with this prime qualification, its influence will prove unprofitable—if not prejudicial—to his work. The Scripture justly insists—that Ministers should be "holy"³—in a peculiar sense men of God—men taught of God⁴—men consecrated to God by a daily surrender of their time and talents to his service—men of singleness of purpose—living in their work—living altogether but for one end; and for the promotion

¹ 1 Thess. ii. ; and again, twenty-one, from a part only of another chapter (2 Cor. vi. 1—12); ten from two verses in a third chapter (Col. i. 28, 29.) Indeed his commentary throughout exhibits a deep study of the Pastoral Office, and an accurate exhibition in detail of its duties, obligations, and encouragements.

² Phil. ii. 25—30. Some beautiful touches are given also of the character of Timothy—verses 19—22.

³ Titus i. 8. Compare ii. 7. 2 Cor. vi. 4—6. 1 Tim. iv. 12.

⁴ It is excellently remarked by Erasmus—' Qui cupit juxta Paulum esse διδακτικός, det operam, ut prius sit Θεοδιδάκτος—i. e. Divinitus edoctus.' Eccles. p. 84.

of this end, “ moved by none of the afflictions that await them ; counting neither their life dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the Ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Such was the Apostle Paul, the living example of his own instructions—as he drew them out in that charge to the Elders of Ephesus,¹ which might serve as an admirable pattern for our Episcopal charges ; and of which Baxter truly observed, ‘ that it better deserveth a twelvemonth’s study, than most things, that young students do lay out their time in.’ ‘ O brethren,’ (continues this earnest pleader for his Master’s work) ‘ write it on your study doors, or set it as your copy in capital letters, still before your eyes. Could we but well learn two or three lines of it, what preachers should we be !—Write all this upon your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the Church more good than twenty years’ study of those lower things, which, though they get you greater applause in the world, yet separated from these, will make you but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.’²

It is obvious, however, that this Ministerial standard pre-supposes a deep tone, experimental character, and devotional habit—habitually exercised in self-denial, prominently marked by love to the Saviour, and to the souls of sinners, and practically exhibited in a blameless³ consistency of conduct. The Apostle justly

¹ Acts xx. 17—35.

² Reformed Pastor.

³ Some of Erasmus’ terms are far too unmeasured—‘ In Ecclesiasta hæc imprimis spectanda sunt, *ut cor habeat ab omnibus vitiis et cupiditatibus humanis mundum*’—(He goes on, however, in his best style of terseness and accuracy of description.) ‘ *ut vitam habeat non tantum a criminibus, sed et suspicione, specieque criminum, puram, inculpatam ; ut spiritum habeat adversus omnes Satanæ machinas firmum, adamantinum, inconcussum : ut mentem igneam, et ad bene merendum de omnibus flagrantem ; ut animum*

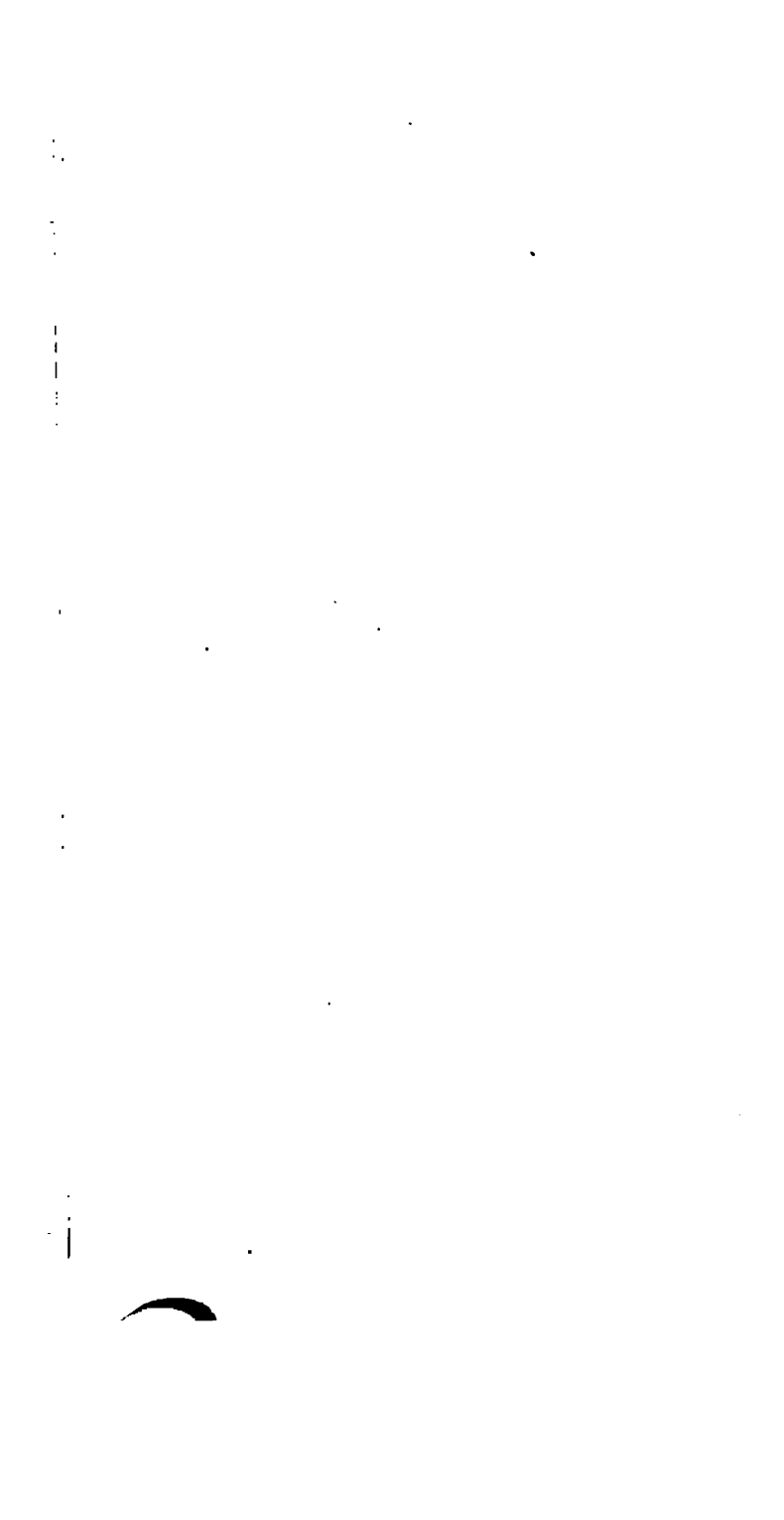
pronounces "a novice"¹ to be disqualified for this holy work. The bare existence of religion, provides but slender materials for this important function.— A babe in grace and knowledge is palpably incompetent to become "a teacher of babes," much more a guide of the fathers. The school of adversity, of discipline, and of experience, united with study and Divine influence, can alone give "the tongue of the learned." Some measure of eminence and an habitual aim towards greater eminence are indispensable for Ministerial completeness; nor will they fail to be acquired in the diligent use of the means of Divine appointment—the word of God and prayer.

II. *Spiritual attainments* also must be combined

habeat sapientem ad condiendam populi stultitiam, cor habeat prudens et oculatum; ut facile dispiciat quid silendum, quidve dicendum, et apud quos, quo tempore, quo modo, temperanda oratio. Qui cum Paulo sciat mutare vocem, et omnia fieri omnibus, utcumque viderit saluti auditorum expedire. Nam hunc unicum oportet esse scopum, ad quem ecclesiastes rationes suas omnes dirigat; a quo si deflecteris oculos, continuo fit, ut quo magis instructus fueris ad dicendum, eo majorem invehas perniciem in gregem Dominicam.' Erasmii Eccles.

We may compare with this, another finished portrait of the Christian Minister from the pen of the admirable Vitringa. 'Quanti igitur facias fidum servum Christi, doctorem evangelii, animo rectum, gloriæ Divinæ et salutis hominum studio flagrantem; non *quærentem quæ sint hominum, sed homines*; non quæ *sua* sunt, sed quæ *Domini*; a Spiritu Sancto doctum, viarum Dei per experientiam peritum; castis purisque moribus; virtutes pietatis, modestiæ, mansuetudinis, zeli, prudentiæ, gravitatis, docentem exemplo; qui, instar lampadis impositus candelabro, omnibus, qui in domo sunt lucem præfert; omnibus salutis suæ cupidus, tum viam salutis demonstrat, tum ipsam gratiam et salutem conditionibus evangelicis dispensat. Quoquo incedit, lux est. Quoquo se vertit, salus est. Ubi aperit, sal est. Ubique carus, venerabilis, non minus solatii aliis impertit, quam ipse sibi solatio est; post decursum vitæ ac laborem studium tandem ausurus se Domino ac Judici suo sistere cum fiducia, et libero ore, administrationis suæ reddere rationem, secundum formulam: 'Duo talenta a te accepi, Domine: totidem lucratus cum sorte tibi reddo.' Pref. animadv. ad Method. Homil.

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 6.



THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY ;

WITH

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF ITS INEFFICIENCY ;

WITH AN ESPECIAL REFERENCE

TO THE MINISTRY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT.

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRIDGES, M. A.

VICAR OF OLD NEWTON, SUFFOLK, AND AUTHOR OF
' EXPOSITION OF PSALM CXIX. '

THIRD EDITION

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE.....	ix

PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY..	1
CHAP.	
I. The Divine Origin and Institution of the Christian Ministry	3
II. The dignity of the Christian Ministry.....	8
III. Uses and necessity of the Christian Ministry	12
VI. The trials and difficulties of the Christian Ministry	16
V. The comforts and encouragements of the Christian Ministry	25
VI. The qualifications of the Christian Ministry	32
VII. Preparation for the Christian Ministry.....	43
SECT. I. Habits of General Study.....	44
II. Special Study of the Scriptures.....	68
III. Habits of Special Prayer.....	81
IV. Employment in the Cure of souls.....	85

PART II.

GENERAL CAUSES OF THE WANT OF SUCCESS IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.....	91
--	----

CHAP.	
I. The Scriptural warrant and Character of Ministerial success; together with the symptoms of want of success.....	94
II. The withholding of Divine Influence the main cause of the want of Ministerial success..	100
III. The enmity of the natural heart a main cause of the want of Ministerial success..	106
IV. The power of Satan a main hinderance to Ministerial success.....	109

CHAP.		PAGE.
V.	Local hinderances to Ministerial success....	112
VI.	The want of a Divine call a main cause of failure in the Christian Ministry.....	116

PART III.

CAUSES OF MINISTERIAL INEFFICIENCY CONNECTED WITH OUR PERSONAL CHARACTER 133

CHAP.		
I.	Want of entire devotedness of heart to the Christian Ministry	136
II.	Conformity to the world.....	144
III.	The fear of man.....	158
IV.	The want of Christian Self-denial.....	163
V.	The Spirit of covetousness.....	178
VI.	Neglect of retirement.....	188
VII.	The influence of spiritual pride.....	197
VIII.	Absence or defect of personal religion.....	202
IX.	The defect of family religion: and the want of connexion of the Minister's family with his work.....	216
X.	Want of Faith.....	229

PART IV.

THE PUBLIC WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY 243

CHAP.		
I.	The institution and importance of the ordinance of preaching.....	245
II.	Preparation for the Pulpit.....	251
	SECT. I. Composition of Sermons.....	258
	II. Habits of Meditation.....	275
	III. Special Prayer.....	279
III.	The Scriptural mode of preaching the Law..	294
	SECT. I. The preaching of the Law—its character—uses—and obligations....	294
	II. The connexion of the Law with the Gospel.....	303

CONTENTS.

v

CHAP.		PAGE.
IV.	The Scriptural preaching of the Gospel....	316
SECT. I.	Doctrinal preaching of the Gospel..	327
	II. Experimental preaching of the Gospel	345
	III. Practical preaching of the Gospel..	351
	IV. Applicatory preaching of the Gospel.	360
	V. Discriminating preaching of the Gospel.....	370
	VI. Decided preaching of the Gospel....	376
V.	The mode of Scriptural preaching.....	379
SECT. I.	Topical and expository preaching....	379
	II. Extempore and written Sermons....	383
VI.	The Spirit of Scriptural preaching.....	397
SECT. I.	In Boldness.....	398
	II. In Wisdom.....	400
	III. In Plainness.....	414
	IV. In Fervency.....	425
	V. In Diligence.....	433
	VI. In Singleness.....	437
	VII. In Love.....	445

PART V.

THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY 453

CHAP.		
I.	The Nature and importance of the Pastoral work.....	456
II.	Treatment of cases in the Pastoral work....	478
SECT. I.	The Infidel.....	478
	II. The Ignorant and Careless.....	481
	III. The Self-righteous.....	483
	IV. The False Professor.....	486
	V. Natural and Spiritual Convictions..	488
	VI. The Young Christian.....	492
	VII. The Backslider.....	498
VIII.	The Unestablished Christian.....	500
IX.	The Confirmed and Consistent Chris- tian.....	502

CHAP.	PAGE.
III. The Visitation of the Sick.....	507
IV. Pastoral Ministry of the Young.....	518
SECT. I. The Sunday School—its importance, constitution, and superintendance.	520
II. Infant Schools.....	537
III. Weekly Schools.....	541
IV. The treatment of the Young in a hopeful state of impression.....	544
V. Young Men.....	548
VI. Practical suggestions on Confirmation	553
V. Sacramental Instruction.....	576
SECT. I. Baptism	578
II. The Lord's Supper.....	582
VI. Clerical and Church Communion.....	585
SECT. I. Clerical Communion.....	586
II. Church Communion.....	589
VII. The office and uses of Helpers.....	603
VIII. Miscellaneous	616

PART VI.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.....	625
INDEX.....	653

PREFACE.

THE Work now presented to the Public originated in a letter to a beloved friend upon the interesting subject of Ministerial inefficiency; which, at his desire, and by the disinterested kindness of the Editor of the *Christian Observer*, was subsequently inserted with a few enlargements in that valuable Miscellany;¹ and an impression taken from thence for private circulation. Several applications having been made for its separate publication, the Writer was induced to reconsider the subject in a more extended range, and to avail himself of the suggestions of friends, until the small pamphlet has gradually swelled into its present extended dimensions.

As to the Work itself—the Writer desires to be with his brethren “in weakness, and in fear, and much trembling.”² He is aware that his proper situation, both in authority and experience, is at the feet of many, who are thus constrained to listen to him; and it would be to him a subject of the most painful regret, if he were supposed to advance any pretensions to a standard of zeal, earnestness, or Ministerial attainment, above his brethren. He has not described what he is, but what he ought, and what he trusts he desires, to be; and if, (after the model of the Country Parson) he has “set the mark as high as he could;” it is, because “he shoots higher than threatens

¹ *Christian Observer*, March, April 1828.

² 1 Cor. ù. 3.

the moon, than he that aims at a tree.”¹ He has endeavoured however to write in the first instance for himself; and to point every arrow of conviction at his own heart—“Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”²

The Writer will be found to have dealt rather largely in illustration—not only, as being more suited to his relative situation with his brethren than didactic instruction; but as exhibiting that sympathy of care and anxiety, which gives to us a peculiar place in each other’s remembrance, an interest in each other’s prayers, and a witness in each other’s hearts.—“The same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren that are in the world.”³

The materials for this work have been brought from different departments of the territory of the Church. Though the Writer has had a special regard to the Ministry of the Establishment (to which he is bound by the strongest and most endearing ties, and which occupies in his view the most commanding station in the Church of Christ); yet he would be sorry to refuse a cordial admission, and to neglect a diligent improvement, of the acknowledged excellencies of the honoured men of God in other communions.⁴ If he should be thought to have been too large in his references, he can only apologize by his anxiety to shelter his own statements (which in themselves could possess but little weight) by the strength of accredited authority.

After all, he is deeply conscious, that this most responsible work has suffered—perhaps materially—from the unskilfulness of its treatment. He would desire however to be “accepted of his brethren,”⁵ in a

¹ G. Herbert’s Preface to ‘The Country Parson.’

² Rom. ii. 21.

³ 1 Peter v. 9.

⁴ The Christian spirit in one of the dignified advocates of our Establishment is truly admirable, which admitted the Life of Philip Henry (often referred to in these pages) into his collection of Ecclesiastical Biography—with the admission, that any Non-conformist of superior piety would also have found a place in his work. Wordsworth’s Ecclesiastical Biography—Preface p. xviii.

⁵ Esther x. 3.

sincere attempt to subserve the grand cause, to which they equally with himself are consecrated ; and he would beg to express his earnest desires to be favoured with private communications for the improvement of a second edition (should it ever be called for) ; for which purpose he subjoins his place of residence at full length.

For his work he has no other wish than that of the Country Parson—‘ The Lord prosper the intention to myself, and others, who may not despise my poor labours ; but add to those points, which I have observed, until the book grows to a complete pastoral.’¹

For himself—he would be animated by the concluding exhortation of an eminent Minister to his Student and Pastor—‘ And now, go thy way, O thou son greatly beloved ; and work in thy lot lively, and prayerfully and cheerfully to the end of thy days ; and wait and look for what the glorious Lord will do for thee at the end of thy days ; in those endless joys, wherein thou shalt shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.’²

*Old Newton, Stowmarket,
June 22, 1829.*

¹ Preface to ‘ The Country Parson.’

² Conclusion to Mather’s ‘ Student and Pastor.’

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The Writer, while he would acknowledge the kind reception with which his work has been favoured, cannot but regret, that the shortness of the interval has precluded him from the advantage of many of those animadversions, by which it might have been considerably improved. He has, however, endeavoured to send it forth a second time, he trusts, with some symptoms of amendment, and (in compliance with the suggestions of some kind and judicious friends,) with considerable enlargement, (especially in the detail of the pastoral department) as well as with the result of a general system of revision throughout. The Writer is most sensible of the many defects of the work ; but under present circumstances he has no other course, than once more to commend it to the gracious consideration of the Great Head of the Church, with an earnest desire, that he would accept it as an offering for his service, and employ it in however mean a degree for the edification of his church ; of that part more especially, in whose prosperity the Writer is most deeply interested.

Old Newton,
Oct. 9, 1829.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

The Writer gladly embraces this opportunity of expressing his acknowledgements to many kind friends, for important and valuable suggestions.¹ He is concerned to have further enlarged the dimensions of his work ; but he was anxious to prepare for himself, and to present to his brethren, a complete manual of our Ministerial responsibilities, privileges, and encouragements ; such as might illustrate the elevated standard of our Ordination engagements, and operate as an additional stimulus to their cheerful fulfilment. By the assistance of his friends, as well as by the time given to him for correction, he is enabled to send forth this Edition with far greater satisfaction to himself than any that have preceded it ; and he has only to add his earnest entreaty, that those, who may be led to the perusal of this work with any measure of interest or profit, would follow it with their earnest prayers, that it may be instrumental to the promotion of the high and important designs of the Christian Ministry.

¹ He would here avail himself of the language of the eminently learned and modest Melancthon.—‘ Let others boast themselves self-taught, I freely confess, that I am daily indebted to many persons for instruction in numerous particulars. To be single-handed is to be weak.’ Scott’s Continuation of Milner, Vol. ii. p. 180.

Old Newton,
Dec. 13, 1830.

PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.



PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND INSTITUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE Church is the mirror, that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene of the display of the Divine Perfections.¹ The revelations made to the Church—the successive grand events in her history—and, above all—the manifestation of the Divine glory in the Person of the Son of God, furnish even to the heavenly intelligences fresh subjects of adoring contemplation.²

The means also employed in the building of the Church are equally illustrative of the wisdom of their great Author. The exhibition of Divine “strength made perfect in weakness” effectually secures the important end—“that no flesh should glory in his presence.” A separate order of men were consecrated to the great work of laying the foundation and raising the superstructure of his Church. Twelve only were included in the original institution, with a commission, bounded at first—within the scanty extent of

¹ See Ephes. iii. 10.

² See 1 Peter i. 12.

4 VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

“Immanuel’s land;” but afterwards enlarged with a tender of the promised blessing to “every creature.”¹ As the work increased upon them, the necessity for a corresponding increase of labourers became apparent. To provide for this exigency, the Divine Mediator had delegated the power of his own commission to his faithful labourers.²—Invested therefore with this authority, they set apart officers for the lower degrees of ministration, they “ordained elders in every Church,” (who were acknowledged to be “made overseers over the flock” by the appointment of the Holy Ghost³) and entrusted the same power of ordination successively to others,⁴ “according as the matter might require,” for the continuance and perpetuity of the holy function. This was evidently agreeable to the purpose of God, who had extended the terms of the special promise “to the ends of the world.”⁵ Not indeed that in this sacred institution he has transferred to men his own divine right and honour; but he employs them for his work, as a man chooses his own instruments for his own designs. And, as no instrumentality was absolutely needed, his selection of men as the delegates of his commission, and the representatives of his person, must be regarded as an act of favour; exercising both our humility in the habit of submission to men of like infirmities with ourselves, and our love in this cementing bond of reciprocal interest.⁶ ‘Thus every step in the way of our salvation hath on it the print of infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness; and this among the rest, that men, sinful weak men, are made subservient in that great

¹ Matt. x. 1—6; xxviii. 18—20. Mark xvi. 15.

² See John xx. 21.

³ Acts vi. 1—6; xiv. 23; xx. 28.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 2. Titus i. 5.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 20.

⁶ Calvin’s *Instit. Lib. iv. c. iii. 1.* Compare Leighton’s *Exposition of Isaiah vi. 8.* Works Vol. ii. 406, 407, Jerment’s edition.

work, of bringing Christ and souls to meet; that by "the foolishness of preaching" (or what appears so to carnal wisdom) the chosen of God are called, and come unto Jesus, and are made wise unto salvation; and that the life, which is conveyed to them by the word of life in the hands of poor men, is by the same means preserved and advanced.'¹

The Great Head of the Church has ordained three grand repositories of his truth. *In the Scriptures* he has preserved it by his Providence against all hostile attacks. *In the hearts of Christians* he has maintained it by the Almighty energy of his Spirit—even under every outward token of general apostacy.² *And in the Christian Ministry* has he deposited "the treasure in earthen vessels" for the edification and enriching of the Church in successive ages.

The most comprehensive view of this Christian Ministry is given in Ephes. iv. 7—16. The grandeur of its introduction is shewn to have been long before prefigured by the glorious descent and ascent of Jehovah upon Mount Sinai.³ Its original grant and institution is traced to the mediatorial work of the Son of God, who, after coming into the world to "purchase unto himself a Church with his own blood," ascended on high to make this suitable provision for its welfare. His work of humiliation ("descending into the lower parts of the earth") obtained this gift for his Church. The proximate cause of its actual communication was his subsequent exaltation to the Mediatorial throne. The high preeminence of this gift appears in its distributive variety of office ("apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers"); and in the im-

¹ Leighton on 1 Pet. v. 2.

² Compare 1 Kings xix. 18, with Rom. xi. 4, 5.

³ Compare Psalm lxxviii. 7—18, with Ephes. iv. 8—10.

portant end for which it was ordained (the completion of the Church, in its deliverance from various threatened evils, and in the closer union and mutual edification of the whole body "growing up into" their glorious "Head.") We cannot conceive any more entire view of this institution, nor one that more derivatively marks its Divine original.

The subject illustrates the Unity of Will and Purpose, with which the Sacred Persons in the Godhead administer the Government of the Church. From each of them did this holy office originate; "*God hath given to us the Ministry of reconciliation.*"¹ Yet was it also, as we have seen, *the gift of his exalted Son*—promised to the Church before his departure from the earth,² communicated as the first act of his glorious power in "filling all things,"³ and sealed in every instance by his commission conjointly with his Father.⁴—At the same time is this office emphatically called "*the Ministration of the Spirit.*"⁵ It is his authority, that calls to the work⁶—his guidance, that directs in it⁷—and his influence, that supplies the needful furniture of gifts and graces.⁸ Thus do the institutions of the Gospel exhibit its deeper and more mysterious doctrines.⁹ The three Persons in the Godhead are severally and distinctly glorified. The Ministry has an equal concern and dependence upon each, and owes equal honour and service to each. Tracing therefore this sacred institution to the footstool of the eternal throne, with what prostration of soul should we bind ourselves to its solemn obligations! "Mine eyes"—saith the Evangelical prophet—"have seen the

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18.

² Psalm lxxviii. 18.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 9.

⁷ Acts xvi. 6, 7.

² Matt. xxviii. 19, 30.

⁴ Gal. i. 1.

⁶ Acts xiii. 2.

⁸ 1 Cor. xii. 9.

⁹ See Ibid 4—6.

King, the Lord of Hosts—*Here am I*”—was his answer to the sacred voice—“*send me.*”¹

Nor can we wonder to see “the chiefest of the Apostles” unable to express his overwhelming sense of his responsibility—“Who is sufficient for these things? ² Who, whether man or angel, “is sufficient” to open “the wisdom of God in a mystery,”—to speak what in its full extent is “unspeakable,”—to make known that which “passeth knowledge,”—to bear the fearful weight of the care of souls? Who has skill and strength proportionate? Who has a mind and temper to direct and sustain so vast a work? If our Divine Master had not himself answered these appalling questions by his promise—“My grace is sufficient for thee;”³ and if the experience of faith did not in some measure enable us to prove, that “our sufficiency is of God;”⁴ who with an enlightened apprehension, could enter upon such an awful service, or, if entered, continue in it?

But how solemn is the sanction—infinately above all human authority—stamped and engraven upon the sacred office! And how tremendous the guilt of rejecting its commission!—“He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.”⁵

¹ Isa. vi. 5—8.

³ Ibid xii. 9.

² 2 Cor. ii. 16.

⁴ Ibid iii. 5.

⁵ Luke x. 16.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE Divine original of the Christian Ministry has already opened a view of its dignity far above any earthly honour or elevation, and such as the infidel *will* can never degrade. An institution—introduced into the world, and confirmed to the Church, with such solemn preparation—conversant with the interests, and entrusted with the charge, of immortal souls—ordained as the main instrument for the renovation of the world, and the building up of the Church—cannot be of inferior eminence. The office of “fellow-worker with God”¹ would have been no mean honour to have conferred upon the archangel nearest the everlasting throne. It formed the calling, the work, and the delight of the Lord of glory during his last years of abode upon earth; and was established by himself as the standing ordinance in his Church, and the medium of the revelation of his will to the end of time. He has not indeed (as the judicious Calvin has observed)—“called his ministers into the function of teaching, that, after they have brought the Church under, they may usurp to themselves the government; but that he may use their faithful diligence to associate

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 9. 2 Cor. vi. 1. This association is evidently that of a Minister with God—and not, we think, (as Doddridge and Macknight have supposed)—of one Minister with another. Comp. Rom. xvi. 3, 9, 21. Phil. ii. 25. iv. 3. Philem. 1, 24. Yet “all is of God.” For this co-operation is “God working in us to will and to do.” The strength for the work is imparted—not natural; nor was there any “fellow-worker” in the first principles of strength or in its subsequent increase. ‘Eximium elogium Ministerii, quod, cum per se agere possit Deus, nos homunciones tanquam adiutores adsciscat, et tanquam organa utatur.’ Calvin in 1 Cor. iii. 9.

the same to himself. 'This is a great and excellent thing, for men to be set over the Church, that they may present the person of the Son of God.'¹ The dignity however of the sacred office belongs to a kingdom "not of this world."² It is distinguished therefore not by the glitter of outward show, but by results connected with eternity, and, in their present influence, productive of happiness, far more solid and permanent than the grasp of men can attain, or communicate.³ It has been well remarked to be 'the highest dignity, if not the greatest happiness, that human nature is capable of here in this vale below, to have the soul so far enlightened as to become the mirror, or conduit, or conveyer of God's truth to others.'⁴ The right consideration, however, together with a chastised sense, of this high elevation, so far from fostering a vain-glorious spirit, has a direct tendency to deepen self-abasement and reverence. Can we help recoiling from so exalted an office—from handling such high and holy things? What! We to convey life, who ourselves are dead! We so defiled, to administer a service so pure, so purifying! "Woe is me"—said one of old, in contrasting this honour with his personal meanness—"for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips"⁵ How can we think of this vast commission—this momentous trust, but as an act of most undeserv'd favour.⁶

¹ Calvin on John iii. 29.

² John xviii. 36.

³ The honourable designations of the sacred office are beautifully illustrated in Burnet's *Pastoral Care*, ch. i. Compare also, Chrysostom *De Sacerdotio*, book iii, Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration*, appended usually to Chrysostom, and Bowles' *Pastor Evangelicus*—1655, 12mo.—Pref. An old writer reckons up and expatiates upon no less than forty-three Scriptural appellations of the dignity and usefulness of the Christian Ministry. *Sal Terræ cap. ii.* by T. Hall. 12mo. Francof. 1658.

⁴ Mather's *Student and Pastor*, p. 161.

⁵ Isa. vi. 5.

⁶ See Eph. iii. 8. 1 Tim. i. 12.

But let the *remembrance of this sacred dignity give a deeper tone of decision* to our ministrations—‘ a Pastor ’—remarks Bishop Wilson—‘ should act with the dignity of a man, who acts by the authority of God.’¹—And this is the true Scriptural standard of our work—“ As we were allowed of God ”—said the great Apostle—“ to be put in trust with the Gospel,” (the highest trust that ever could be reposed in man) “ *even so we speak* ; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”² Let it also connect itself with its *most responsible obligations*—that we disgrace not the dignity—that we live under the constraint—of our high calling—“ Ye are the salt of the earth.—Let not the salt lose its savour. Ye are the light of the world.—Let your light shine before men ”—are the impressive exhortations of our Great Master.³ “ Neglect not ”—said the great Apostle—“ the gift of God that is in thee : stir it up ”⁴ with the daily exercises of faith, self-denial, and prayer. Quesnel observes⁵ —‘ What courage, what boldness, what freedom ought the dignity of the Ministry to give a bishop or priest ; not for his own interests, but for those of the Church, not through pride, but fidelity ; not while he employs carnal means, but while he makes use of the armour of God.’ ‘ The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry, our right-arm is withered ; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains.’⁶ But let *the weight of this dignity be relieved by Evangelical encouragement*—The

¹ *Sacra Privata.*

² 1 Thess. ii. 4.

³ Matt. v. 13—16. See an awakening appeal in the conclusion of Bishop Taylor’s first sermon on the Minister’s duty in life and doctrine. Works, Vol. vi.

⁴ 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

⁵ On 2 Cor. iii. 8. Comp. Daven. in Col. i. 1.

⁶ Hall on the Discouragements and Supports of the Ministry, p. 51.

ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness constitutes the chief glory of the evangelical economy. "Therefore," says the Apostle, after an exhibition of its preeminent excellency—"seeing *we have this ministry*"—so richly endowed, so freely vouchsafed—"as we have received mercy, *we faint not.*"¹

A sense of the dignity of our office—accurately formed, carefully maintained, and habitually exercised—is therefore of the highest importance. It elevates the standard of Christian consistency even in the prospective consideration and choice of the work. For what is unsuitable to the Ministerial character is obviously unsuitable to the probationer for the Ministry. In the actual discharge also of duty, the mind will thus be excited to a more solid and devoted consecration; and the whole man will be gradually formed in this heavenly mould—exalted, not elated. Dignity of character will thus correspond with dignity of station. The "office" will be "magnified"² in perfect harmony with the lowliest humility—and indeed never more eminently displayed, than in the exercises of genuine humility; while the man invested with these high responsibilities sinks in the dust as an "unprofitable servant."³

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 1.

² See Rom. xi. 13.

³ The views of Philip Henry were truly worthy of his high office. Thus he wrote on the day of his ordination—"I did this day receive *as much honour and work* as ever I shall be able to know what to do with. Lord Jesus! proportion supplies accordingly." Two scriptures he desired might be written in his heart. 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. and 2 Chron. xxix. 11. And so influential were these views in maintaining a course of deep-toned humility, 'that he laid himself out with as much diligence and vigour,' in a very contracted sphere, 'as if he had the oversight of the greatest and most considerable parish in the country.'—P. Henry's Life, (Williams's Edition) p. 38; which Dr. Chalmers has justly characterized, as 'one of the most precious religious biographies in our language.' Oh! for a large supply of such Ministers in every department of the Church of God!

CHAPTER III.

THE USES AND NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN
MINISTRY.

‘ BECAUSE the nature of things consisting, as this doth, in action, is known by the object whereabout they are conversant, and by the end or scope whereunto they are referred ; we must know that the object of this function is both God and men : God, in that he is publicly worshipped of his church ; and men, in that they are capable of happiness by means, which Christian discipline appointeth. *So that the sum of our whole labour in this kind is to honour God and to save men.*’¹

The Ministry of the word was ordained for the planting and watering² of the Church. The epistles were written to the respective churches, which had been planted by the preaching of the gospel—to supply the place of an oral ministry—to reduce them to church order and unity—to confirm them in Christian steadfastness, and to advance them to Christian perfection. The several individuals also addressed were the fruits of the Christian ministry. Timothy, Titus, and Philemon appear to have been “ begotten in Christ Jesus,” through the ministry of Paul ; as were probably “ the elect lady and her children,” and the beloved Gaius, “ the seals of the apostleship ” of John.³

¹ Hooker, book v. 76. The Divine purpose respecting the Church most harmoniously combines these two ends, “ I will place *salvation* in Zion for Israel *my glory*.” Is. xlv. 13.

² See 1 Cor. iii. 6.

³ See the inscriptions to the several epistles to these individuals, and Philemon 19.

Thus has this Divine institution regard to the continual progress of the church, both in its collective body and in the several states of its individual members. It was given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ."¹ There was not only a foundation to be laid, but a building to be raised. Elementary truths were to be carried to perfection.² Constant superintendency was needed even in the most flourishing churches. The administration of the word was the appointed remedy to "perfect that which was lacking in the faith" of the Thessalonians.³ Peter wrote his second epistle to those that "were established in the faith;" yet "he would not on that account be negligent to put them *always* in remembrance of these things."⁴ For the same reason the beloved disciple wrote to the church; "not"—said he—"because ye know not the truth, *but because ye know it,*"⁵

The general uses of the Christian Ministry are therefore sufficiently obvious. It is the appointed channel of communication from the head to the body in its several members, by which the spiritual life is first imparted, and subsequently maintained with increasing influence of consolation and fruitfulness. Its more specific uses may be readily collected from the various scriptural illustrations of the office—each bearing a relation to the nature of the ministration, and the necessities of those ministered unto. If the church be called a flock, the Minister is the pastor to "seek that which is lost—to strengthen the diseased—to heal the sick—to bring again that which was driven away;" in a word, to shepherd the flock in all the exercises of tenderness, consideration, and care,

¹ Eph. iv. 12.

² Comp. 1 Cor. ii. 6. Heb. vi. 1, 2.

³ See 1 Thess. iii. 10, 11. ⁴ 2 Pet. i. 12. ⁵ 1 John ii. 21.

that connect themselves with this endearing character.¹ If the family of Christ be an household, the Minister is "the faithful and wise steward,"² who dispenses the provision of the house according to the necessities of its several members. If the Church of God be a city, he is the watchman³ to wake and warn slumberers of their peril. If it be a husbandry, he is the "labourer,"⁴ to plant and water the soil—to cleanse the earth—to watch the growth of the plant—and instrumentally to bring forward the harvest. If it be a building, he is the "Master-builder,"⁵ to build upon the "sure foundation" lively stones—a spiritual house—"growing into an holy temple of the Lord, builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."⁶ If there be a treaty of peace to be negociated between the Majesty of heaven and a world of rebels, he is the ambassador, entrusted with "the Ministry of reconciliation;" and praying them in Christ's stead—"Be ye reconciled unto God."⁷

We do not limit the infinite extent and power of the Divine operations, when we speak of the necessity of the Christian Ministry. These uses of the sacred institution are not and cannot be necessary to God, as if he were unable to work without them. But they are such as he has appointed and made necessary in the constituted order of means, for the accomplishment of his own purposes of mercy to the world. His sovereign pleasure has ordained this first link of means in the chain of salvation, so that without a Ministry there should be no hearing of the word—consequently no faith in the only Saviour of whom it speaks—no calling upon his name—no

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 4.² Luke xii. 42.³ Ezek. xxxiii. 7.⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 9.⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 10.⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 5. Eph. ii. 20, 22.⁷ 2 Cor. v. 20.

salvation.¹ It is not our province to prescribe what he might have done, but to mark the consummate wisdom of what he has done, and to exercise the humility of faith, when we cannot discern the reasons of his dispensations. Doubtless he might have instructed as well as converted Paul by a miracle; but it was his pleasure to direct him to a fellow-sinner for the explicit revelation of his will.² The angel also might have been an instructor to Cornelius; but, in order to maintain the order of the divine œconomy, the Ministry of the word was made the medium of conveying evangelical light to his soul.³ This, therefore, is the ordained means of conversion, and of subsequent establishment in every stage of the Christian life; and its necessity must continue, while there is a single sinner to be brought into the family of God, or a single grace in the heart of the saint to advance to perfection.⁴

¹ Rom. x. 13—16. 1 Cor. i. 21. Thus also the destitution of the Ministry is the dark sign of the departure of the Divine presence from the Church. Compare 2 Chron. xv. 3. Hosea iii. 5.

² Acts ix. 10—17.

³ Ibid x. 3—6.

⁴ It is a weighty remark of Hooker's, that 'religion without the help of a spiritual Ministry is unable to plant itself. Which assertion,'—says he,—'needeth no further confirmation. If it did, I could easily declare, how all things which are of God, he hath by wonderful art and wisdom soldered as it were together by the glue of mutual assistance, appointing the lowest to receive from the nearest to themselves what the influence of the highest yieldeth. And therefore the church, being the most absolute of all his works, was in reason to be also ordered with like harmony, that he worketh might, no less in grace than in nature, be effected by hands and instruments, duly subordinated to the power of his own Spirit.' Book v. 76. Mosheim observes to the same purport, that 'the best system of religion must necessarily either dwindle to nothing, or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated and explained by a regular and standing Ministry.'—Eccles. Hist. Cent. i. part ii. chap. ii. 'Not even,'—says Calvin,—'is the light and heat of the sun—not even is meat and drink—so necessary for the support and cherishing of life, as is the maintenance of the Ministry of the Gospel church on earth.' Instit. lib. iv. c. iii. 3.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRIALS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.¹

OUR Lord's illustration of the necessity of a previous counting of the cost in important undertakings, bears with peculiar force of application upon the Christian Ministry.² Too often has the neglect of serious and prayerful calculation given awful power to the temptation to draw back from so momentous a work. No previous contemplation can indeed give any just apprehensions of its difficulties, any more than a spectator of the field of battle can realize the intense anxiety of the actual conflict. Whatever general notions of a serious and intelligent character may be attained, much will yet be left, that experience alone can supply—much that will enforce the exhortation once given by a veteran to a young soldier—"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Thou therefore endure hardness, *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*"³ Indeed the difficulties of this work must deter the considerate conscientious mind from undertaking it with any view to temporal ease and comfort. Many other tracks in life offer a large promise of indulgence. But to this work is most

¹ For some serious and important views of this subject we may refer to Scougal's Sermon on the Ministerial function.

² Luke xiv. 28—30. Erasmus justly laments the evil resulting from this inconsideration—'Verum ad conciones sacras admittuntur, interdum etiam assiliunt, adolescentes, leves, indocti, quasi nihil fit facilius, quam apud populum exponere Divinam scripturam, et abunde sufficiat perfricuisse faciem, et abstersa pudore linguam volvere. Hoc malum ex eo fonte manat; *quod non perpenditur*, quid sit ecclesiastici concionatoris tum dignitas, tum difficultas, tum utilitas.'

³ 2 Tim. ii. 1—3.

especially linked the daily cross,¹ and in it must be anticipated severe and sometimes overwhelming trials, arising from *the professing church, the world, the power of Satan, and ourselves.*

Our *relation to the professing church* is associated with no common difficulties. How instructive are the deep views of the apostolical Eliot on this work. 'He looked upon the conduct of a church,' as his biographer (Cotton Mather) informs us, 'as a thing attended with so many difficulties, temptations, and humiliations, as that nothing but a call from the Son of God could have encouraged him unto the susception of it. He saw that flesh and blood would find it no very pleasant thing to be obliged unto the oversight of a number, that by a solemn covenant should be listed among the volunteers of the Lord Jesus Christ ;² that it was no easy thing to feed the souls of such a people, and of the children and the neighbours, which were to be brought into the same sheep-fold with them ; to bear their manners with all patience, not being by any of their infirmities discouraged from teaching of them, and from watching and praying over them ; to value them highly as the flock which God purchased with his own blood, notwithstanding all their miscarriages ; and in all to examine the rule of scripture for the warrant of whatever shall be done ; and to remember the day of judgment, wherein an account must be given of all that has been done. It was herewithal his opinion (as the great Owen expresses it) that notwithstanding all the countenance

¹ 'Evangelium Christi sincerè prædicantibus nunquam de est crux.' Erasm. The Apostle connects endurance of affliction with the work of an evangelist. 2 Tim. iv. 5. See Daven. in Col. i. 24, 29.

² Alluding to the congregational form of church government and union, which was most prevalent in America in Eliot's time.

of a different character. We may come to them "as a lovely song of one that playeth well upon an instrument." Their enmity, though not radically subdued, may be restrained, and even clothed with much of outward courtesy. To meet this aggravated difficulty with gentleness, and yet to detect and uncover the evil, requires a rare combination of firmness, wisdom, and consideration. To risk the almost certain consequence of a change of feeling towards us, demands the exercise of much prayer and faith. The kindness of the world is far more formidable than its enmity. Many, who would have been ready to stem the torrent of its opposition, have yielded with compromising indulgence to its paralyzing kindness.

Difficulties must also be expected *from the restless and subtle activity of the tempter*. Apart from that baneful influence, by which (as we shall afterwards shew ¹) he obstructs the general efficiency of the work—his power over the tone of the Minister's mind is most distressing. Often indeed does he succeed in unhinging his spirit, and paralyzing his exertions by diverting his mind from the main design, or by bringing the dark cloud of unbelief over his soul, so that the Ministration of the Church, as Calvin observes—'is not an easy and indulgent exercise, but a hard and severe warfare, where Satan is exerting all his power against us, and moving every stone for our disturbance.'²

But after all—the greatest difficulties *derive their origin and power from ourselves*. The spiritual character of our employment—no more than secular occupations—exempts us from the conflict with our corruptions. It is not easy to overcome our natural

¹ Part ii. chapter iv.

² Calvin on 2 Cor. xi. 23.

love of ease, our indisposition to self-denying devotedness, and our false tenderness in finching from the declaration of unpalatable truths. Were we angels by nature as well as by office, the difficulty would be of little account. But, while we bear upon us the marks of our apostacy, we cannot advance without a constant and sometimes most painful effort.¹ Many circumstances from this exciting tendency materially increase the difficulty. We must labour when our hearts are in a cold and languid state. Hence the danger, lest the powerful energy of the word should be weakened in its application to ourselves, lest we should gradually lose our relish for our work, excuse ourselves from its self-denying exercises, and sink into heartless despondency. A course of opposition also to our message may stir up a selfish unhumiliated spirit. Popularity is yet more dangerous. The few, who escape its influence unhurt, have been exercised in painful conflicts, such as have shewn their deliverances from this fiery trial to have been nearly miraculous. Symptoms of success, unless tempered with personal abasement and habitual watchfulness, excite to self-confidence. The want of these tokens, on the other hand, is too often accompanied with impatience, or despondency : so that—assaulted at the extreme

¹ 'When a Minister, deeply impressed with the important difficulty of his work, looks into his own heart, to explore the resources with which he is furnished for so difficult a service, there, alas! he meets with little, that does not serve to increase his sense of weakness, and to confirm his fears. For it must be remembered, that he is a man of like passions with his flock, inheriting a body of corruption;—that he is perhaps deficient in ability—perhaps unfortunate in the natural constitution of his mind—that at all events he has to struggle with infirmities, is exposed to temptations, has more to accomplish than others, as well as greater difficulties to surmount; and that, whilst more will be expected from him, in himself he may have no resources above those of his congregation.' Venn's Sermons, vol. i. p. 9.

put to a severe and searching trial ; and with all its dignity of character and principles of encouragement we are made to feel, that “ if a man desires the office, he desires ” a toilsome and self-denying, as well as “ a good work.”¹ We must work, like Nehemiah and his men, with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other.² The progress of the work would be stopped by the laying down of the trowel. The enemy would gain a temporary advantage by the sheathing of the sword. Nothing therefore remains but to maintain the posture of resistance in dependance upon our wise Master-builder, and the Captain of our salvation—waiting for our rest, our crown, our home. Not indeed that we can complain of a dispensation, so obviously fraught with important blessings to our own souls, and subservient to the best ends of the Ministry. The discipline of the cross is most needful to repress the over-weaning confidence of presumption ; to establish an habitual dependance on the Divine promises ; to prove the power of faith, the privileges of prayer, and the heavenly support of the word of God ; and to furnish us with “ the tongue of the learned ; ” that from our own experience of the difficulties and supports of the Christian warfare we “ should know how,” after our Master’s example, “ to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”³ Yet in our contact with Ministerial difficulty the enlivening views of faith are most important. Conscientious helplessness sinks under the depressing weight

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 1. ‘ Opus non dignitatem ; laborem non delicias.’—Jerome. ‘ The sacred Ministry is not a state of idleness or of delight ; but a holy warfare, in which there are always toils and fatigues to be endured. Whoever is not resolved courageously to maintain the interests of Jesus Christ, and to labour continually to enlarge his kingdom, is not fit for this warfare.’—Quesnel on 1 Tim. i. 18.

² Neh. iv. 17.

³ Isa. i. 4.

of responsibility. Faith links our weakness in immediate connexion with the promises of Divine aid ;¹ and enables us to say to the mountain of difficulty — “ Who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.”² Thus discouragements, properly sustained and carefully improved, become the most fruitful sources of eventual encouragement in the Christian Ministry ; while love to our work bears us on above all our difficulties.³

CHAPTER V.

THE COMFORTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

IT is of the utmost importance to grasp the whole compass of the Christian Ministry. The view of one side only of the prospect (whichever side that may be) must necessarily give an imperfect and inaccurate representation. Painful and habitual experience constrains us to be with our people “ in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.”⁴ The opposition of the world—the inconstancy of the wavering—the inconsistency of the mere professor—the difficulties, that beset the inquirer’s path—our frequent disappointments with the hopeful—combined with the recollection of what we are—what we ought to be—and what we ought to do—all this fearfully acts upon our weakness and depravity. Did we carry on “ the warfare at our own charges,”⁵ we should “ be pressed

¹ Such as Exodus iv. 10—12. Jer. i. 6—10. Matt. xxviii. 20.
² Cor. xii. 9. ³ Zech. iv. 6.

⁴ ‘Magnum opus omnino et arduum conamur : sed nihil difficile amanti puto.’ Cicero. ⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 3. ⁶ 1 Cor. ix. 7.

out of measure, above strength.”¹ But such are “the contradictions meeting in our employ;” that, though it is a sorrow, it is yet “a sorrow full of joy.”² “Temptations” indeed “take us, besides such as are common to man.” We have a painful pre-eminence above our fellow Christians in bearing a double share of “the burden and heat of the day.” But if “the sufferings of Christ abound in us, our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”³

The grounds of support and encouragement are fully commensurate with the momentous difficulty of the work. How *encouraging is the recollection of our office, as the ordinance of Christ, and as the standing proof of his love to his Church.* For will he not honour his own institution, and secure its appointed end in the glory of his name and the happiness of his Church? Will not he that sent us furnish us for our work? May we not plead his ordinance, as the ground of dependence upon him for all needful assistance and encouraging acceptance?

*Nor is our work to be measured by the feeble resources of human agency, but by the Almighty power of the Spirit of God.*⁴ Did we depend upon the energy of mere moral suasion, we should cry out in

¹ 2 Cor. i. 8.

² See an exquisite hymn on Ministerial Experience in the Olney Collection, Book ii. 26.

³ 2 Cor. i. 5.

⁴ Witsius's spirit on entering upon the duties of his Professorship was full of encouragement—‘Quidni ergo jucundissima mihi illa Domini verba applicem, quibus servum suum Josuam quondam affatus est? ‘Nonne ego precepi tibi? Confirmare igitur et fortis esto; quia tecum est Dominus Deus tuus quocunque iveris.’ Licet infirmitatis me meæ conscientia anxium reddat, reficit tamen Divinæ gratiæ, nunquam suos deserentis, ad sustentandum prompta facilitas—illius autem gratiæ, cui lubitum est virtutem suam in infirmitate confirmare, quæque abjectissimis sæpe et rei gerendæ minime idoneis instrumentis utitur, ut totius operis gloria in solidum ac illibata sibi remaneat.’ Oratio De Vero Theologo. Misc. Sacra, ii. 851, 852.

the prostration, not of conscious feebleness, but of heartless despondency—"Who is sufficient for these things?" But the assurance, that our Ministration is that "of the New Testament—not of the letter, but *of the Spirit*"—sustains us under all apprehended difficulties, with most cheering prospects of success.¹ "The life-giving Spirit" employs our Ministry as the vehicle of conveying his Divine influence "to open the blind eyes," and to quicken the spiritually dead. And to have his Divine seal to our work, as the honoured instruments of communicating the life of God, with all its attendant privileges, to the soul of man; cannot but bring with it a reflex delight of the most exalted character.²

The blessed fruits of the Ministry in winning sinners to Christ, and stamping his holy image upon their hearts, are most refreshing. The subsequent walk also of this renewed people in the faith, hope, and love of the Gospel, forms our ground of unceasing thanksgiving to God, our chief joy, and the very life of our life. "We have no greater joy, than to

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

² 'I will remind you,'—says Cotton Mather—"that one of the greatest personages (an Archbishop and a Lord-Keeper) in the English nation (Archbishop Williams) once uttered this memorable speech. 'I have passed through many places of honour and trust both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England, for seventy years before: but were I assured, that by my preaching I had converted but one soul unto God, I should herein take more comfort than in all the honours and offices that have ever been bestowed upon me.' You are entering upon a work, that will keep you continually in the way of this incomparable satisfaction; and I hope. . . . that the saving, or enlightening and edifying, of one soul at any time, will be a matter of more joy unto you, than if all the wealth of Ophir should flow in upon you.' Mather's Student and Pastor, pp. 159, 160. The Christian Pastor—as Bowles remarks—would readily make with the hireling the compact of the king of Sodom with Abraham,—“Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.” (Gen. xiv. 21.) Lib. iii. c. 9.

hear that our children walk in truth.”¹ We turn to them in the expression of parental anxiety and delight—“Now we live, *if ye stand fast in the Lord.*”²

The interest we possess in the affectionate sympathies of a beloved people is also a subordinate source of comfort and encouragement. Here we find a full compensation for the scorn of an ungodly world, and the secret spring of many an hour of support and enjoyment, by which we are carried forward in our painful course. The Christian and intelligent part of our flock well know, that we are “men of like passions with themselves,” that our path is strewn with snares, and our hearts are keenly wounded with sorrow and temptation. Christian sympathy engages them to “communi-*cate with our affliction.*” A sense of duty and privilege calls forth their exertions, and directs their conduct so that, as far as possible, all just grounds of complaint or grief may be removed; and our labours for their sakes, and in their service made consoling to our own souls.³ Our debt of obligation to the secret expressions of their love at the throne of grace is reserved among the discoveries of the great day, to add dignity and emphasis to the acknowledgment now made “in part,” and then to be more fully proclaimed; that “we are their rejoicing, even as they also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.”⁴

¹ 2 John 4.

² 1 Thess. iii. 7—9.

³ Quesnel thus beautifully expresses the mutual relation between the Pastor and the people—“The latter ought to alleviate the troubles which attend the pastoral function, by a filial respect, “obedience and fear.” The former ought to make a suitable return on all occasions by his care, and continually to cherish the flock by fresh testimonies of satisfaction, joy, and tenderness.” On 2 Cor. vii. 15, 16. Also on 2 Cor. ii. 3. Phil. ii. 26.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 14.

Another comfort and encouragement of the Ministry, of a more individual character, deserves to be mentioned—*its special advantages for the cultivation of personal religion.*¹ Such is the deadening influence of secular callings upon the concerns of eternity, that without special exercises of watchfulness and prayer the Christian cannot maintain his high elevation.² Often did the “man after God’s own heart” —when engrossed with the cares of his kingdom— seem to envy the Ministers of the sanctuary their peculiar privilege of a nearer approach to their God, and a constant abidance in his work.³ And what exercised Christian does not mourn over the necessary secularities of his calling, as abridging him of his spiritual enjoyments; and distracting even those seasons, which, by the active habit of self-denial, he is enabled to consecrate to communion with his God? It is so difficult to be *employed*, without being “*entangled*, with the affairs of this life;”⁴ there are so many weeds of a worldly growth and of rank luxuriance, “choking the word,” when it has given fair promise of fruit, and is even advancing “to per-

¹ See this clearly illustrated by Bishop Burnet—Pastoral Care, ch. viii. Mr. Boston, the well-known author of ‘The Fourfold State,’ dates his earliest thoughts and desires of the Ministry from the consideration—‘because of all men Ministers were most taken up about spiritual things.’ ‘Is it not our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and honourable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling is a kind of living in heaven; and, besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own?’ Leighton’s Letter to the Clergy of Dumblane. Compare also his Works, ii. 452. We shall afterwards, (Part iii. ch. viii.) be led to remark upon the peculiar hindrances arising from this source. Yet these—be it remembered—are the workings of temptation acting upon a corrupt nature; while the direct tendency of a spiritual function must be the advancement of spiritual religion in the heart.

² Compare Psalm cxix. 25, with Isa. xl. 31.

³ Compare Psalm lxxv. 4; lxxxiv. 4.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 4.

section,"¹ that the comparative freedom from these embarrassing hindrances is not among the least of the privileges of the Christian Ministry. Add to this—while secular occupations have a tendency to divert us from God, this holy employ naturally draws us to him. In calling us to the search of the rich mines of Scripture, to heavenly contemplation, and spiritual devotedness, it furnishes the appointed means for the salvation of our own souls; so that "he that watereth is watered also himself."² And thus—the devotion of time, the concentration of attention, and the improvement of talents and opportunities—when applied in simplicity to that employment, which is the present and eternal rest of the soul, forms and matures the character for a richer supply of heavenly communications, and for more extensive usefulness in the Church of God.

We remark also the *confirmation, afforded to our own faith by the daily routine of a spiritual ministration*. The palpable display of the blindness and enmity of the natural man—the necessity of a radical change of heart and habit—the means by which this change is effected—its beneficial influence upon the whole character—its sustaining efficacy, as manifested in "the patience and faith of the saints"—all meet us on every side in our closer and more familiar survey of man; strengthening our personal faith in Divine revelation, and enabling us to set our seal with stronger confidence, that in our official testimony "we have not followed cunningly-devised fables."³

But it is the *prospect of eternity*, that consummates

¹ Luke viii. 14.

² Prov. xi. 25.

³ 2 Pet. i. 16.—See this point admirably drawn out in a somewhat varied view in the Bishop of Chester's interesting sermons on the Christian Ministry, pp. 37—44.

the encouragements of the Christian Ministry. Then indeed will the Divine aphorism be fully illustrated—"He that winneth souls is wise"—when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."¹—Thus the recompense of the Christian Minister—though only the instrument of the divine purpose, and the organ of Almighty agency—is as rich and full, as if the glory of the work were his own. What clearer proof is needed, that the rewards of the Gospel dispensation are of "grace and not of debt"—the indulgence of the free mercy of God—wholly irrespective of man's desert—which, were its claims insisted upon—instead of exalting him to the Divine favour—would cover him with "shame and everlasting contempt?"

Admitting, therefore, that we are called to difficult and costly service; yet have we abundant cause to be satisfied with the sustaining support and consolation provided for every emergency. All indeed may be included in the single promise—"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."² "The officers he employs, in every age, are entitled to this treasure, as well as those of the first age.—Keep your mind believingly attentive to this "*always*"—*Lo, I am with you*, to qualify and succeed you in whatever work I call you to. "*Lo, I am with you*," to comfort you by my presence and Spirit, when your hearts are grieved." "*Lo, I am with you*," to defend and

¹ Prov. xi. 30. Dan. xii. 3. 1 Pet. v. 4. For a magnificent view of the glory of the Ministerial crown, see Hall's Sermon on the Discouragements and Supports, &c. pp. 51—53.

² Matt. xxviii. 20.

strengthen you in trials, though all men forsake you. While he stands with you, there can be no just cause of fear or faintness. You need no other encouragement. This you shall never want, if you continue faithful : and hereupon you may conclude—‘The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.’¹

Thus does every view of the Christian Ministry encourage us to increased exertion and devotedness ;² so that in the midst of many painful exercises of faith and patience, we can “thank God and take courage.” None, who have devoted themselves in simplicity to the work, will hesitate in subscribing to Mr. Scott’s testimony—‘With all my discouragements and sinful despondency ; in my better moments, I can think of no work worth doing compared with this. Had I a thousand lives, I would willingly spend them in it : and had I as many sons, I should gladly devote them to it.’³

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

MR. NEWTON’S important remark may be considered as an axiom.—‘None but he who made the world can make a Minister of the Gospel.’ He thus proceeds to *illustrate* his position (for it cannot be

¹ D. Williams on the Ministerial Office, 1708. pp. 43, 44.

² Ab humi repentibus curis erigat animum tuum considerata functionis dignitas : a prevaricatione deterreret delegantis dignitas : Socordiam excludat muneris difficultas. Industriam ac vigilantiam extimulet præmii magnitudo, quod non ab hominibus, sed a Deo erit expectandum. Erasm. Eccles. p. 193.

³ Scott’s Life, pp. 343, 344.

thought to need any *proof*)—‘ If a young man has capacity ; culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator ; but a true Minister must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received.’¹

These principles wrought out and exhibited in their practical influence and application, will furnish a complete view of the necessary qualifications for the Christian Ministry. There is something so fearfully responsible in entering upon this work with incompetent abilities, that the man can scarcely have felt any serious concern for his own soul, for the immortal interests of his fellow-sinners, or for the welfare of the Church of God, whose mind has not been more or less exercised upon the ground of personal unfitness. When we see the most “ able Minister of the New Testament ” that the Church has ever known, deeply penetrated, and indeed well-nigh overwhelmed,² with the sense of the “ necessity laid upon him ”—we may well be ashamed, that, with qualifications far inferior, our sense of obligation should be less accurate and constraining.

In our discussion of this subject, we must be careful neither to fall short of the Scriptural standard of Ministerial Qualification, nor to insist upon anything as indispensable, independent of that standard. Much that is desirable, can scarcely be deemed essential. We must also distinguish between that deficiency which incapacitates for the work, and a comparative measure of unfitness as contrasted with Ministers of acknowledged eminence.—“ There are diversities of gifts,”

¹ *Newton's Works, Vol. v. 62.*

² 2 Cor. ii. 16.

and "differences of administration" of the same gifts, under "the same Spirit and the same Lord."¹ But under all circumstances, the Divine call to this sacred office will be evidenced by a supply of competent qualifications for its discharge.

In "considering the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,"² we witness a most harmonious combination of seemingly opposite characteristics. The Ministry of our Lord was distinguished by the dignity of God, and the sympathy of a man and a brother—by the authority of the commissioned delegate of his Father, and yet by the humility of a servant, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."³ If "he spake as one having authority," yet were they "gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," tempered with "the meekness of wisdom" and "the gentleness" of love. Indeed the several features of his Ministerial character furnish the most accurate standard of our official qualifications, and the most explicit directory for every exercise of public or private Ministration. But, lest we should despond in our infinite remove from this standard of perfection, let us mark the Apostolic Ministry, as administered by "men of like passions with ourselves," and yet, by the grace of their Divine Master, following closely in his steps. A rich treasure of instruction will be found in an attentive perusal of the Acts of the Apostles. The Epistles will also furnish a complete portraiture of the character, no less than a comprehensive system of the doctrines of the Christian Ministry. The different traits of St. Paul's ministry—as they break forth in the natural flow of his writings, and the brief sketches which he occasionally intersperses—

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5.

² Heb. iii. 1.

³ Matt. xx. 28.

embody the various particulars of his invaluable didactic instructions. Quesnel has drawn out no less than thirty-three individualities of the sacred character from a single chapter.¹ The incidental mention of Epaphroditus introduces some of the primary qualifications for the sacred work. Paul speaks of him as his "brother"—a sincere Christian. He marks his sympathy, diligence, and perseverance, as his "fellow-labourer;" his "endurance of hardness" as his "fellow-soldier;" his tender attachment to his flock, in longing to relieve them from needless anxiety on his account; and his high estimation of his Master's work, as dearer to him than life itself.²

In taking a general view of Ministerial qualifications, we must remark—that, if the Ministry be a spiritual work, a corresponding *spiritual character* seems to be required in its administrators. Whatever be the value of human literature in a Minister; unconnected with this prime qualification, its influence will prove unprofitable—if not prejudicial—to his work. The Scripture justly insists—that Ministers should be "holy"³—in a peculiar sense men of God—men taught of God⁴—men consecrated to God by a daily surrender of their time and talents to his service—men of singleness of purpose—living in their work—living altogether but for one end; and for the promotion

¹ 1 Thess. ii. ; and again, twenty-one, from a part only of another chapter (2 Cor. vi. 1—12); ten from two verses in a third chapter (Col. i. 28, 29.) Indeed his commentary throughout exhibits a deep study of the Pastoral Office, and an accurate exhibition in detail of its duties, obligations, and encouragements.

² Phil. ii. 25—30. Some beautiful touches are given also of the character of Timothy—verses 19—22.

³ Titus i. 8. Compare ii. 7. 2 Cor. vi. 4—6. 1 Tim. iv. 12.

⁴ It is excellently remarked by Erasmus—'Qui cupit juxta Paulum esse διδακτικός, det operam, ut prius sit Θεοδιδάκτος—i. e. Divinitus edoctus.' *Eccles. p. 84.*

of this end, "moved by none of the afflictions that await them; counting neither their life dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the Ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Such was the Apostle Paul, the living example of his own instructions—as he drew them out in that charge to the Elders of Ephesus,¹ which might serve as an admirable pattern for our Episcopal charges; and of which Baxter truly observed, 'that it better deserveth a twelvemonth's study, than most things, that young students do lay out their time in.' 'O brethren,' (continues this earnest pleader for his Master's work) 'write it on your study doors, or set it as your copy in capital letters, still before your eyes. Could we but well learn two or three lines of it, what preachers should we be!—Write all this upon your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the Church more good than twenty years' study of those lower things, which, though they get you greater applause in the world, yet separated from these, will make you but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.'²

It is obvious, however, that this Ministerial standard pre-supposes a deep tone, experimental character, and devotional habit—habitually exercised in self-denial, prominently marked by love to the Saviour, and to the souls of sinners, and practically exhibited in a blameless³ consistency of conduct. The Apostle justly

¹ Acts xx. 17—35.

² Reformed Pastor.

³ Some of Erasmus' terms are far too unmeasured—'In Ecclesiasta hæc imprimis spectanda sunt, ut cor habeat ab omnibus vitiis et cupiditatibus humanis mundum'—(He goes on, however, in his best style of terseness and accuracy of description.) 'ut vitam habeat non tantum a criminibus, sed et suspicione, specieque criminum, puram, inculpata; ut spiritum habeat adversus omnes Satanæ machinas firmum, adamantinum, inconcussum: ut mentem igneam, et ad bene merendum de omnibus flagrantem; ut animum

pronounces "a novice"¹ to be disqualified for this holy work. The bare existence of religion, provides but slender materials for this important function.—A babe in grace and knowledge is palpably incompetent to become "a teacher of babes," much more a guide of the fathers. The school of adversity, of discipline, and of experience, united with study and Divine influence, can alone give "the tongue of the learned." Some measure of eminence and an habitual aim towards greater eminence are indispensable for Ministerial completeness; nor will they fail to be acquired in the diligent use of the means of Divine appointment—the word of God and prayer.

II. *Spiritual attainments* also must be combined

habeat sapientem ad condiendam populi stultitiam, cor habeat prudens et oculatum; ut facile dispiciat quid silendum, quidve dicendum, et apud quos, quo tempore, quo modo, temperanda oratio. Qui cum Paulo sciat mutare vocem, et omnia fieri omnibus, utcumque viderit saluti auditorum expedire. Nam hunc unicum oportet esse scopum, ad quem ecclesiastes rationes suas omnes dirigat; a quo si deflecteris oculos, continuo fit, ut quo magis instructus fueris ad dicendum, eo majorem invehas perniciem in gregem Dominicam.' *Erasmii Eccles.*

We may compare with this, another finished portrait of the Christian Minister from the pen of the admirable Vitranga. 'Quanti igitur facias fidum servum Christi, doctorem evangelii, animo rectum, gloriæ Divinæ et salutis hominum studio flagrantem; non quærentem quæ sint hominum, sed homines; non quæ sua sunt, sed quæ Domini; a Spiritu Sancto doctum, viarum Dei per experientiam peritum; castis purisque moribus; virtutes pietatis, modestiæ, mansuetudinis, zeli, prudentiæ, gravitatis, docentem exemplo; qui, instar lampadis impositus candelabro, omnibus, qui in domo sunt lucem præfert; omnibus salutis suæ cupidus, tum viam salutis demonstrat, tum ipsam gratiam et salutem conditionibus evangelicis dispensat. Quoquo incedit, lux est. Quoquo se vertit, salus est. Ubi aperit, sal est. Ubique carus, venerabilis, non minus solatii aliis impertit, quam ipse sibi solatio est; post decursum vitæ ac laborem studium tandem ausurus se Domino ac Judici suo sistere cum fiducia, et libero ore, administrationis suæ reddere rationem, secundum formulam: 'Duo talenta a te accepi, Domine: totidem lucratus cum sorte tibi reddo.'" *Pref. animadv. ad Method. Homil.*

¹ 1 *Tim. iii. 6.*

with a spiritual character—including chiefly a clear and comprehensive view of the evangelical system. However we may admire the simplicity of the Gospel, (consisting only of a few leading ideas, and included often in a single verse¹) and though an experimental acquaintance with its elementary principles “is able to make wise unto salvation;” yet the Scripture, in its comprehensive extent, is given for a variety of important purposes, and for this express intent; “that the man,” or the Minister, “of God” (who seems to be chiefly meant) “might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”² The solid establishment of the people may be materially hindered by the Minister’s contracted statement, confined interpretations, or misdirected application of Scripture. His furniture for his work must therefore include a store of knowledge far beyond a bare sufficiency for personal salvation. “The *priest’s lips should keep knowledge*, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for He is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.”³ He must be the “householder—instructed unto the kingdom of heaven—which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”⁴ Without this store

¹ Such as John iii. 16, or 1 Tim. i. 15.

² 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

³ Mal. ii. 7.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 52. ‘The cursory perusal of a few books,’ (as Dr. Owen well observes) ‘is thought sufficient to make any man wise enough to be a Minister. And not a few undertake ordinarily to be teachers of others, who would scarcely be admitted as tolerable disciples in a well ordered church. But there belongeth more unto this wisdom, knowledge, and understanding than most men are aware of. Were the nature of it duly considered, and withal the necessity of it to the Ministry of the Gospel, probably some would not so rush on the work as they do, which they have no provision of ability for the performance of. It is, in brief, such a comprehension of the scope and end of the Scripture, of the revelation of God therein; such an acquaintance with the system of particular doctrinal truths in their rise, tendency, and use; such a habit of mind in judging of spiritual things, and comparing them one with another; such a distinct insight into the

he is incompetent for the great end of his work—"to speak unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."¹ For how can he—without an enlarged acquaintance with his own principles—exhibit them in their true light, or apply them to successive emergencies?

III. But *spiritual gifts* must be connected with spiritual attainments. The rich variety of these gifts (the fruit of the ascension of Christ, and the furniture of his servants for their important work²) is a matter of equal admiration and praise. There must be an ability to communicate and apply what has been imparted—else the highest attainments—however serviceable to their possessors—can never become the public benefit of the Church. Yet here, much discernment will be necessary, lest we confound the ready exercise of spiritual gifts with Divine influence, and thus foster self-delusion of a most fatal tendency.

The diligent student of the Epistles of St. Paul will readily observe, that they were written, as his brother Apostle reminds us, "according to the wisdom given unto him."³ With what admirable skill does he adapt his instruction to an almost infinite diversity

springs and course of the mystery of the love, grace, and will of God in Christ, as enables them, in whom it is, to declare the counsel of God, to make known the way of life, of faith, and obedience unto others, and to instruct them in their whole duty to God and man therein. This the Apostle calls his "knowledge in the mystery of Christ," which he manifested in his writings. For as the Gospel, the dispensation and declaration which is committed unto the Ministers of the Church, is "the wisdom of God in a mystery;" so their principal duty is, to become so wise and understanding in that mystery, as that they may be able to declare it to others, without which they have no Ministry committed unto them by Jesus Christ.' Owen's Pneumatologia.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

² Compare Eph. iv. 9, 8, with 1 Cor. xii. 11, 12.

³ 2 Pet. iii. 15.

of persons, occasions and circumstances—to their strength or feebleness—their progress or decay—their mistaken or wilful abuses—their different capacities, advantages, or disadvantages! With what exquisite address does he “change his voice,” in meekness or in vehemence—in tenderness or in sharpness—in reproof or in expostulation—thus in his administration, as in his personal conduct, “becoming all things to all men, if that by any means he might save some!”¹ This spiritual wisdom is as important for the building up of the Church of God, as was the wisdom imparted to Bezaleel and Aholiab for the raising of the Levitical tabernacle.² Thus we “approve ourselves unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”³ Thus, as “Stewards of the mysteries, and rulers over the household,”⁴ of God, we distribute the stores of provision to every member of the household, suited to their several wants, and answering to their Master’s wise and gracious will. Thus we take account of their individual state—the strength and exercise of their spiritual capacities—the kind of food, which they severally require for the nourishment of the Divine life, according to their infantine, growing, or adult state—their special hindrances or advantages—their advance, apparently stationary condition, or visible decay in the ways of God. The treatment of these several individualities demands a deep and well-digested acquaintance with the methods of Divine grace, in order to administer a seasonable and effective distribution of the word. The Apostle marks also the gift of “utterance”⁵ as a spiritual endowment in the dispensation of the word—

¹ See the close of quotation from Erasmus, *ut supra*, p. 36, *note*.

² Exod. xxxv. 30—35.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 1. Luke xii. 42.

⁵ Eph. vi. 19.

enabling us to address our people with “opened mouth” and “enlarged heart;”¹ to “speak as the oracles of God”—in mode as well as in matter, in “sound speech” as well as in “sound doctrine;”² delivering our testimony with holy confidence, “not as the word of man, but in truth the word of God—” in a manner suitable to the dignity of the pulpit, and yet plain to the weakest capacity. The natural powers of clear thinking and arrangement of matter—of aptitude of expression, and of familiar and appropriate illustration, are often used as sanctified instruments of conveying the life-giving power of the Gospel with increasing acceptance and application. Not however that these abilities are communicated by an extraordinary or sudden afflatus, or that they necessarily accompany in an equal measure the efforts of diligence.³ The diligence of faith will ever receive its measure of encouragement in the growth, increase, and improvement of Ministerial gifts. Yet we must not intrench upon the exercise of the Divine sovereignty; remembering, that “all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”⁴

‘It is not to be supposed’ therefore (to use the words of a sensible writer) ‘that such an office can be easily filled. It demands not merely some but many,

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 11.

² Titus ii. 1, 7, 8.

³ Bishop Sanderson observes—‘It was Simon Magus’s error to think, that the gifts of God might be purchased with money; and it has a spice of his sin, and so may go for a kind of simony, to think that spiritual gifts may be purchased with labour. You may rise up early and go to bed late, and study hard, and read much, and devour the marrow of the best authors; and, when you have done all, unless God give a blessing to your endeavours, be as lean and meagre in regard of true and useful learning, as Pharaoh’s lean kine were, after they had eaten the fat ones. It is God, that both ministereth the seed to the sower, and multiplieth the seed sown: the principal and the increase are both his.’

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

may, all excellencies, in happy combination. A person may, in a general way, be said to be qualified for the Ministry, who has talents for preaching, though not fitted for profitable private intercourse, or the affairs of Church Government. But this is evidently not a complete adaptation to the work. It is, on the contrary, a very imperfect one, and one with which no man should be content. For all the aspects of Ministerial labour are, if not equally, yet highly important; every one of them far too important to be trifled with. The right performance of each affords facilities for the rest, and gives additional beauty and efficacy to all. To be fit for only one department, cannot but greatly impede our activity, and diminish our success. To fill the Ministerial office with a degree of satisfaction and benefit commensurate with its capabilities, or with the desire of a heart awake to its importance, we must be all that it demands—men of God, perfect, completely furnished to every good work.¹ This is an elevated standard. He that aims highest will most approximate to it,

¹ Hinton on Completeness of Ministerial Qualification, pp. 11, 12. 'It will not fail to be objected'—remarks Mr. Ostervald—'that—' If none were to be admitted into holy orders, except those who are possessed of every necessary qualification, there could not possibly be procured a sufficient number of Pastors for the supply of our Churches.' To which I answer, that a small number of chosen Pastors is preferable to a multitude of unqualified teachers. At all hazards we must adhere to the command of God, and leave the event to Providence. But in reality the dearth of pastors is not so generally to be apprehended. To reject those candidates for holy orders, whose labours in the Church would be wholly fruitless, is undoubtedly a work of piety. Others on the contrary, who are qualified to fulfil the duties of the sacred office, would take encouragement from this exactness and severity; and the Ministry would every day be rendered more respectable in the world.' Ostervald on Sources of Corruption.

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

WE have already seen, that the weight of Ministerial responsibilities renders the work apparently more fitting to the shoulders of angels than of men.¹ It is therefore a matter of the deepest regret, that any should intrude upon it, equally unqualified for its duties, and unimpressed with its obligations. ‘Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread.’ Many see little necessity for preparation.—But here, if ever, labour, diligence, observation, and intelligence, are needful to produce a “workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”²

The influence also of selfish or secular motives awfully blinds the conscience to the sense of the present necessity, and to the anticipation of the day of account; while young men of ardent feelings and promising talents, but with unfurnished minds and unrenewed hearts, are thrust forward by the persuasion of injudicious friends, or by the excitement of some momentary bias, into the sacred office. The Church has severely suffered from this woeful inconsideration; and the victims of this self-deluding impetus have felt to their cost its bitter fruit in the disappointment of their Ministry and the discomfort—if not the ruin—of their own souls. In other cases, the precious time for gathering in the store has been either wasted in feebleness and sloth; or misapplied in studies, which have no direct tendency to form a solid, judicious, and

¹ Onus Angelicis humeris formidandum. Augustine.

² Nulla ars doceri præsumitur, nisi intenta prius meditatione discitur. Ab imperitis ergo pastoribus magisterium pastorale suscipitur in magna temeritate, quoniam ars est artium regimen animarum. *Greg. de Cura Pastor. cap. 1.*

experimental Ministry ; so that, with every advantage of deliberation, but a slender stock of spiritual or intellectual furniture is ready to meet the successive and daily increasing demands.

A considerate calculation, therefore, of the momentous cost opens the prospect of an efficient Ministry—because the work is then contemplated,—not in the colouring of a self-indulgent anticipation, but in its true light, as warranted by Scripture, and confirmed by the experience of every faithful labourer,—a work not of ease, but of self-denial—not of hasty effort, but of patient endurance—not of feeling and impulse, but of faith, prayer, and determination.

A season of preparation—employed in storing the mind with Scriptural doctrine, and in directing it to devotional and practical purposes—in habits of self-communion and converse with God, and in the exercises of active godliness, will turn to most profitable account throughout the course of a protracted Ministry. We shall venture to offer a few suggestions on the subject under the divisions—of Habits of General Study—The Special Study of the Scriptures—Habits of Special Prayer—and Employment in the cure of souls.

SECTION I.

HABITS OF GENERAL STUDY.

“GIVE attendance to reading”¹—is the Scriptural rule for Ministerial study. It is obviously of a general character, nor is there any reason for restricting its application to the Sacred Volume. “Paul the aged,”

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 13.

in sending for his "books and parchments,"¹ (which, it may be presumed he wanted for perusal,) exemplified the comprehensive extent of his own rule. Indeed who can doubt, that the Church is built up by the Ministry of the pen as well as of the mouth; and that in both ways "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man *to profit withal?*"² We cannot suppose that God would suffer the labours of his servants, in communicating the results of exercised, deep, and devotional study, to be in vain. The experience of men of God, like that of diligent travellers, is a public benefit; and the fruit of it in successive ages is preserved as a most valuable store of important knowledge to the Church.

The Apostle's own practice again explains his rule—to embrace the wide field of *General study*.³ His introduction of heathen aphorisms in the illustration or application of sacred truth⁴ proves, that he appre-

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 13.

² 1 Cor. xii. 7.

³ Thus Mr. Scott explains it, as referring 'to the study of the Scriptures, or of *any other books, which could add to his fund of profitable knowledge.*' His earlier notions on these subjects, he candidly confesses) 'were too contracted.' Mature consideration, however, formed his studious life upon more enlarged principles, which he never failed strongly to inculcate; marking, at the same time, the importance of a due subordination to the main end. 'The object of all your studies,' (he writes in one of his letters) 'should be, neither celebrity, advantage, nor knowledge *for its own sake*, but furniture to enable you to serve God in your generation.' Life, pp. 102, 103, 330. A Minister of the present day said to a friend, who found him reading Gibbon's History—that 'he read every thing with a particular view to his Ministry, that he collected some materials for the pulpit from books of almost every description, and that he made all his readings contribute something towards what was needful for the Sunday.' Christian Observer, Oct. 1828, p. 608. Indeed to restrict our reading on important points, because they have no immediate connection with the subject in hand, would be to exclude ourselves from the benefit of much valuable collateral knowledge, and preservative from prejudice and misconception.

⁴ Such as Acts xvii. 28. 1 Cor. xv. 33. Titus i. 12.

hended no necessary debasement of Christian instruction from an intermixture of human learning. Stephen mentions it to the honour, not to the discredit, of the Jewish Lawgiver, that he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."¹ The illiterate owe a mighty debt to human learning, for a translation of the Scripture, which otherwise would have lain by them as a dead letter in an unknown tongue. The intelligent reader is indebted to the same source for the explanation of many of its difficulties; and for many powerful defences of its authority, which enable him "with meekness and fear," but yet with confidence, to "be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh him, a reason of the hope that is in him."²

At the era of the Reformation learning and religion revived together. The learning which Erasmus brought into the schools (notwithstanding its too great alliance with "philosophy and vain deceit"³) was a material assistance to Luther in his labours in the Church. 'We are taught by St. Paul's Epistles, that we may avail ourselves of every human aid to dispense the blessings of the Gospel. All these human aids, are valuable gifts of God, and only cease to be blessings by the abuse of them. It is true, that the Gospel may be preached with great energy by Ministers possessing very inconsiderable attainments in literature. It sometimes happens, that the most successful Ministrations are conducted by men of very moderate acquirements. And indeed the character of the Gospel seems to require, that in most cases (where the true doctrine is preached) it should give more honour to zeal and diligence than to genius and

¹ Acts vii. 22.

² 1 Peter iii. 15.

³ Col. ii. 8.

learning. But it is also true, that God is pleased to make himself known by the use of means. And when the means are used in subordination to his grace, he will honour the means. Let us then honour human learning. Every branch of knowledge, which a good man possesses, he may apply to some useful purpose. If he possessed the knowledge of an archangel, he might employ it all to the advantage of men and glory of God.¹

As well might we suppose, that the all-sufficiency of grace supersedes the importance of general knowledge, as that a child under the influence of grace is equally fitted for the Christian Ministry, with an intelligent adult under the *same degree* of heavenly influence. But if this knowledge is not to be despised, ‘then it will follow,’ (as President Edwards has remarked,) ‘that the means of obtaining it are not to be neglected, viz. study; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for publicly instructing others. And, though having the heart full of the powerful influences of the Spirit of God may at some time enable persons to speak profitably, yea, very excellently, without study; yet this will not warrant us

¹ Dr. Buchanan’s Sermon preached before the Church Missionary Society, inserted in his volume of Sermons, pp. 249—257. See some valuable remarks in Scott’s continuation of Milner, vol. ii. pp. 385, 386. ‘I am confidently persuaded,’—says Dr. South—that there is no endowment, no natural gift whatever, with which the great Father of lights has furnished the mind of man, but may, in its highest operations, be sanctified, and rendered subservient to this great work of the Ministry. Real religion engages no man, *particularly no Minister*, to be dull, to lounge, and to be indolent; but on the contrary, it stirs up all the active powers of the soul in designing and bringing about great and valuable ends.’ Leighton declared—‘that there could not be too much learning, if it were but sanctified.’ At the same time, pointing to his books, he said—‘One devout thought is worth them all’—meaning, no doubt, that no accumulation of knowledge is comparable in value to *internal holiness*.’ *Life by Rev. J. N. Pearson*, p. cxx.

needlessly to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon it, that the angel of the Lord will bear us up, and keep us from dashing our foot against a stone, when there is another way to go down, though it be not so quick.'¹

May the writer suggest in this view, the importance of a conscientious regard to the course of University study? Even where the pursuit of academical distinctions is passed by, the daily exercises of regularity, discipline, and self-denial, furnish an effectual safe-guard against the detrimental influence of mental, and possibly also religious, dissipation. In the theological department of the prescribed course, we cannot but regret the want of a more direct reference to the Christian Ministry. But—apart from this deficiency—much store is laid in of important principles of knowledge—the studious habit is formed—and a tone of mind is acquired or strengthened for the subsequent attainment of methodized, well-digested, and comprehensive views.²

Professor Campbell remarks — ‘ that, whatever in respect of knowledge supplies the materials necessary for edifying, comforting, and protecting from all spiritual danger the people that may be committed to his charge, or is of use for defending the cause of his Master, must evidently be a proper study for the man,

¹ Distinguishing marks of the work of a true spirit. Works, vol. viii.

² Perhaps some of us in the recollection of this important era may be led to make Philip Henry's confession; and would that it might be made with equal sincerity and tenderness of spirit! ‘ What must needs be done in college-exercise, for disputations every day in Term time, for theames and verses one a week, and for declamations; when it came to my turn, I did as others of my standing, and sometimes had prayse for it. But as for that which we call hard study, giving myself to reading, late and early, and digesting what I read by daily serious reviews, I was too much a stranger to it.’

who intends to enter into the holy Ministry. Again—Whatever may enable him to make a proper application of those acquisitions in knowledge, so as to turn them to the best account for the benefit of his people, is not less requisite. To little purpose will it be to him to be possessed of the best materials, if he have not acquired the skill to use them. The former we may call the theory of the profession ; the latter the practice. The first regards purely the science of theology ; the second the application of that science to the purpose of the Christian pastor.’¹

‘ The science of theology ’ consists in whatever may tend to illustrate, confirm, enforce, or recommend Divine Revelation. However superficial our knowledge may be on some other subjects, here at least it should be intelligent and comprehensive—including *a competent acquaintance with the Evidences of Christian religion—the Holy Scriptures—and the History of the Church, and especially of our own Church.* In regard to the *Evidences*—Dr. Leland’s volumes furnish a panoply for the defender of the faith in the Deistical controversy—as does Butler’s Analogy in the close combat with the Infidel. In the more direct track—Paley’s ‘masterly analysis of external Evidence—Doddridge’s popular survey of the whole field—the Bishop of Chester’s original and satisfactory treatise (professedly confined to a single argument, but incidentally embracing the main points)—and Mr. Wilson’s Lectures (equally addressed to the understanding and to the conscience)—these may well command our chief attention. The cold abstract metaphysics of Clarke—the evangelical and enlivening display of Charnock—and the popular and analogical

¹ *Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence*—Lecture 1.

proofs of Paley and Gisborne¹—should be digested as illustrative of the character and perfections of the Divine Author of our religion. Nor should Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ* be forgotten, as opening a new track of collateral evidence of Christianity, which has since been extended to a wider field with satisfactory reasoning.²

Reserving the subject of *acquaintance with the Scriptures* for the next section, we proceed to remark *the importance of Church History, as a component part of Ministerial study.* ‘This will teach the student’—(as Dr. Dwight justly observes)—‘the sins and virtues, the errors and sound doctrines, the prosperous and adverse circumstances, which have existed in the church in its various ages; together with the causes, by which they have been produced. Generally he will derive from this source the same advantages, in the ecclesiastical sense, which the statesman derives in a political sense, from civil history. He will learn what the church has been; why it has thus been; and how in many respects it may be rendered better and happier.’³ Mosheim will furnish the requisite information respecting the visible church, and Milner respecting the real church. A comparison of these two works in the prominent events of successive eras will open a field of most enlarged and interesting, but too often painful, contemplation. A work, combining the two in a comprehensive grasp, and with impartial but decided Christian views, remains yet to be supplied to the church.⁴

¹ See Clarke on the Attributes. Charnock's Works, Vol. i. Paley's and Gisborne's Natural Theology.

² The Veracity of the Gospels and Acts argued from undesigned coincidences. By Rev. J. J. Blunt, 8vo. 1828.

³ Dwight's Theology, chap. v. p. 227.

⁴ Weisman's *Historia Sacra* (2 Vols. 4to. 1745, by a disciple

The importance of an intelligent acquaintance with the grounds of his own church, seems to direct the candidate for the Ministry in the Establishment, to a thoughtful study of Hooker's incomparable work. The power with which he has set forth the apostolical foundation of our church, and its careful conformity to the Scriptural model, is at once above all praise, and proof against all attack. Nothing has since been added materially to strengthen the ground on which he has fixed her—nothing indeed is needed. But the characteristic of the work—that which gives to it its peculiar dignity and interest, and in which it differs from many similar works of acknowledged ability—is *its holiness*. It not only exhibits the exquisite symmetry of the outward superstructure, but it views the interior of the temple with the eye of a man of God. The work is cast into the mould of the subject matter. It marks the genuine spiritual character of the church in its requirements and its privileges, and displays the “beauty of holiness” stamped upon the services of her sanctuary. We hesitate whether to admire more—the strength or the sanctity of his Fifth Book ; but it would be difficult to produce objections to the system or detail of our Ecclesiastical polity (the result either of prejudice, misconception, or conscientious inquiry) that are not there met with a satisfactory consideration.

Jewell's Apologies are highly deserving attention, as being of a kindred spirit and eloquence with of Dr. Spener's school) is considered by Mr. Conybeare to combine erudition and piety, but it is little known, and being shut up in Latin, is scarcely popular enough to supply the vacuum. Spanheim's Ecclesiastical Annals, from the creation of the world to the reformation (contained in the first volume of his works) is a store-house of valuable information. A translation of his own abridgment of this work has lately appeared by the Rev. George Wright.

Hooker. Comber will give an able and devotional exhibition of our public formularies. The doctrines of the Church are best known by a careful comparison of her Homilies and Articles with the word of God. Burnet's History of the Reformation furnishes most interesting details of their gradual formation upon the Scriptural basis. His Exposition of the Articles (if it does not always display the full and clear views of Evangelical truth, and if it occasionally errs in an excess of candour) contains a vast body of information well worthy of the attention of the Ministerial student.

But after all, it is in the wide field of divinity, that the student, like David, must "prepare with all his might for the house of his God."¹ He had need be a man of store—"a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." His "lips must keep knowledge," that they may "seek the law at his mouth."² His course of reading therefore must embrace a comprehensive view of Scripture in its doctrinal light, practical obligation, and experimental influence. In the first of these departments, Robinson's Christian System and Dwight's System of Theology will furnish most valuable materials for digestion. In the latter fields, the writings of our Reformers open a rich treasure-house. From the mass of their writings the difficulty of selection is proportionably great.³ Cranmer and Jewell however stand foremost for deep learning, large views of truth, and Christian wisdom and eloquence. Bradford's writings for their unction of spirit, and edifying and experimental matter, deserve the highest regard. Among the Foreign Reformers, Calvin,

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 2.

² Mal. ii. 7.

³ We cannot forbear to recommend Mr. Richmond's Selection, (Fathers of the English Church) and a more recent digest now in progress under the direction of the Religious Tract Society.

Luther, and Melancthon, indisputably are 'the first three.' Yet to select from upwards of thirty folios is no easy task. Calvin's Commentaries however (even in the judgment of Bishop Horsley and others unfriendly to his peculiar dogmas) are among the most valuable expositions of the Sacred Volume. His Institutes (apart from the system which they were intended to unfold) are full of admirable illustrations of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. His expositions of the Moral law and of the Sacraments are eminently judicious and practical. Luther's Commentary on the Galatians exhibits the most full and enlivening display of the grand doctrine of justification probably ever given to the Church. His Diatribe against Erasmus (allowing for some hasty statements) is a powerful defence of the humbling doctrines of the Gospel against the pride of reason and self-sufficiency. Melancthon's Common Places (taking care to obtain the latest expression of his sentiments) was one of the most important and influential works of the Reformation era, and abounds with solid and Evangelical statement. Indeed this school affords perhaps the most Scriptural model for the moulding of our system of Divinity. Its standard of theology is high and consistent, its statements of Christian doctrine are less encumbered with distinctions, less fettered by systematic accuracy, and more immediate and direct in their reference to the great object of our faith, than those of the subsequent school.¹

The Divines of the Puritan school, however, (with due allowance for the prevalent tone of scholastic subtleties) supply to the Ministerial student a large

¹ The Harmony of the Confessions, (4to. 1643,) and Corpus et Syntagma Confessionum, (4to. 1612,) are well worthy of consideration in the study of the School of the Reformers.

fund of useful and edifying instruction. If they be less clear and simple in their doctrinal statements than the Reformers, they enter more deeply into the sympathies of Christian experience. Profoundly versed in spiritual tactics—the habits and exercises of the human heart—they are equally qualified to awaken conviction and to administer consolation, laying open the man to himself with peculiar closeness of application; stripping him of his false dependencies, and exhibiting before him the light and influence of the Evangelical remedy for his distress. Owen stands preeminent among the writers of this school. ‘His scholars’ (as Mr. Cecil observes) ‘will be more profound and enlarged, and better furnished than those of most other writers.’ Among his voluminous works, we may mark his Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews (with all its prolixity), as probably the most elaborate and instructive comment upon a detached portion of Scripture. His work on the Spirit (though discordant in some particulars from the principles of our Church) embraces the most comprehensive view of this vitally-important subject. His exposition of Psalm cxxx, exhibits the most full and unfettered display of Divine forgiveness, admirably suited to the perplexities of exercised souls. His Tracts upon ‘Understanding the mind of God in Scripture,’ and ‘the Reason of Faith,’ manifest his usual accuracy of spiritual discernment. His Treatises upon Indwelling Sin, Mortification of Sin, the Power of Temptation, and the Danger of Apostacy—mark uncommon depths of exploring the secrecies of the heart. His view of Spiritual Mindedness draws out a graphic delineation of the tastes and features of the new character. And indeed upon the whole—for luminous exposition, and powerful defence of Christian

doctrine—for determined enforcement of practical obligation—for skilful anatomy of the self-deceitfulness of the heart—and for a detailed and wise treatment of the diversified exercise of Christian experience, he stands probably unrivalled. The mixture of human infirmity with such transcendent excellence will be found in an unhappy political bias—in an inveterate dislike to episcopal government,¹ and (as regards the character of his Theology,) a too close and constant endeavour to model the principles of the Gospel according to the proportions of human systems. But who would refuse to dig into the golden mine from disgust at the base alloy, that will ever be found to mingle itself with the ore ?²

Baxter deserves to be mentioned in this School—though his views of the Gospel appear to the writer not to partake of the fulness of Owen ; nor (as Mr. Cecil remarks) ‘ is he to be named with him as to furnishing the Student’s mind.’ Yet is his ‘ Christian Directory ’ a most valuable work upon Casuistical Divinity. His ‘ Reasons for the Christian Religion ’ constitute a powerful defence of the bulwark of our faith. His ‘ Saints’ Rest ’ is a fine specimen of heavenly contemplation interspersed with most pungent addresses to the lukewarm and careless—though with

¹ We refer not to his decided views of independency, but to his aggressive spirit in interposing animadversions upon the Establishment throughout his most spiritual and discursive writings. Dwight has defended the principles of Dissent from Episcopacy with equal power and determination ; but in that spirit of Christian moderation, which conciliates respect, even when it fails of conviction.

² Though his works will be the Minister’s constant companion through his course, yet are they most valuable parts of his preparatory study, as exhibiting Scriptural doctrines in an experimental mould and in practical influence—a complete pattern of that form of Ministry which equally adapts itself to the various purposes of our office.

too scanty infusion of the melting and attractive influence of evangelical motives. It were needless minutely to particularize more. R. Bolton, Howe, Charnock, are peculiarly distinguished by strength of genius and fund of matter (though with the occasional mixture of obscurity and bombast). Perhaps Flavel might be remarked as furnishing the best model of earnest and affectionate preaching with unction of spirit, clearness of doctrine, and direct inforcement of practical obligations.

No department, however, of Ministerial study is of greater importance than Pastoral Theology. Chrysostom on the Priesthood, for its deep-toned solemnity of eloquence¹—Herbert's Parson, for its primitive simplicity—Burnet, for its impressive detail of the Pastoral obligations—Bowles, for its excursive range throughout every department of the work—Baxter's Reformed Pastor, for its awakening apprehensions of Ministerial responsibility, realizing it as in the immediate presence of God and in the light of eternity—these are works for the Minister's first

¹ We must, however, remark upon the evident deficiency of Chrysostom's Treatise in those lively views and exercises of faith, which are the grand stimulants to our work. But for the characteristic we have mentioned, combined with practical expositions and an elevated standard of Ministerial conduct and obligations, it is only to be equalled by Baxter's celebrated and invaluable work. His deficiency disables him indeed as a sustaining comforter to the desponding Minister. But the man, who could exclaim in fearful astonishment and hesitation—*Θαυμάζω, εἰ τινὰ ἐστὶ τῶν ἀρχόντων σωθῆναι*; (Homil. on Heb. xiii. 17.) and who declared, that he was shaken as with an earthquake every time he read these words, (De Sacerd. vi. i.) must have much to teach us of more serious, self-abasing, and exciting views of our sacred work. We may also observe of Baxter's work, that his heart-stirring exhortations would have lost none of their pungency, had they flowed more fully and naturally from the enlivening and constraining principles of faith in the promises of God, and a realized apprehension of the love of Christ.

shelf. Close by their side may stand **Ministerial Biography**—the embodying of the deep-felt obligations in active and devoted operation. Such lives as those of Archbishop Leighton, Alleine, P. Henry, M. Henry, Halyburton, Cotton Mather, Eliot, Brainerd, Doddridge, Bishop Wilson, Martyn, Scott, Richmond, and T. Lloyd, (lately published)—are of the highest value and consideration. More lessons of practical detail and encouragement may be learnt from this branch of study, than from whole treatises of abstract theology.

The Apostle enforces the habit of study upon his beloved son as a means of preserving his youthful ministry from contempt.¹ And, indeed, (as Dr. Buchanan has observed) ‘in this age, when learning is general, an ignorant clergyman will be treated with contempt.’² The wide extension of knowledge proportionably increases our responsibility of storing our minds with subjects of general interest; as well to diversify our materials of solid instruction, as to protect our character and office from that contempt, to which a palpable inferiority to the intelligent part of our congregation would expose us. The Apostle’s rule of study was not given to “a novice,” but to a convert of many years standing; who had been blest from his childhood with an excellent scriptural education; ³ who was endowed with good natural talents, spiritual gifts, and pre-eminent religious advantages under the apostle’s personal tuition; and whose early elevation in the Church shewed a satisfactory improvement of his privileges. Yet is he warned to instruct

¹ See 1 Tim. iv. 12, 13.

² Church Missionary Proceedings, Fourteenth Anniversary, p. 353, note.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

himself before he attempted to instruct others,—to “give attendance” first “to reading”—then “to exhortation, to doctrine.” Such advice given to an elder under such circumstances, and in an age of inspiration, bears upon it the weight of authority.

Nor let it be thought, that studious habits must necessarily infringe upon our more active employments. What shall we say to the nine ponderous folios of Augustine, and nearly the same number of Chrysostom—volumes not written; like Jerome’s, in monastic retirement, but in the midst¹ of almost daily preaching engagements, and conflicting, anxious, and most responsible duties—volumes—not of light reading—the rapid flow of shallow declamation, but the results of deep and well-digested thinking? The folios also of Calvin—the most diligent preacher,² and of Baxter the most laborious pastor, of his day—full of thought and matter, bear the same testimony to the entire consistency of industrious study with devoted Ministerial diligence. The secret of this efficiency seems to have much consisted in a deep sense of the value of that most precious of all talents—*time*; and of an œconomical distribution of its minutest particles for specific purposes. Mr. Alleine would often say, ‘Give me a Christian, that counts his time more precious than

¹ ‘Ye heard yesterday—ye shall hear to-morrow’—very commonly occurs in their Homiletical writings.

² ‘What shall I say of his indefatigable industry, even beyond the power of nature, which being paralleled with our loitering, I fear will exceed all credit? and may be a true object of admiration, how his lean, worn, spent, and weary body could possibly hold out. He read every week in the year three divinity lectures, and every other week over and above; he preached every day, so that (as Erasmus saith of Chrysostom) I do not know, whether more to admire the indefatigableness of the man, or his hearers. Yea, some have reckoned up, that his lectures were yearly one hundred and eighty six, his sermons two hundred and eighty six, besides Thursday he sat in the presbytery,’ &c. &c. Clark’s Lives.

gold.’¹ Mr. Cotton² would express his regret after the departure of a visitor—‘I had rather have given this man a handful of money, than have been kept thus long out of my study.’ Melancthon, when he had an appointment, expected not only the hour but the minute to be fixed, that time might not run out in the idleness of suspense. Seneca has long since taught us, that time is the only thing, of which ‘it is a virtue to be covetous.’ But here we should be, like the miser with his money—saving it with care, and spending it with caution. It is well to have a book for every spare hour, to improve what Boyle calls the ‘parentheses or interludes of time; which, coming between more important engagements, are wont to be lost by most men for want of a value for them: and even by good men, for want of skill to preserve them. And since goldsmiths and refiners’—he remarks—‘are wont all the year long to save the very sweepings of their shops, because they may contain in them some filings or dust of those richer metals, gold and silver; I see not, why a Christian may not be as careful, not to lose the fragments and lesser intervals of a thing incomparably more precious than any metal—time; especially when the improvement of them by our meleteticks may not only redeem so many portions of our life, but turn them to

¹ Alleine’s Life and Letters, p. 94.

² The grandfather of Cotton Mather, an excellent scholar, formerly of Emmanuel college, and one of the first settlers in New England. One of his cotemporaries in New England (Mr. Norton) if he found himself not so much inclined to diligence and study, as at other times, would reflect upon his heart and ways, lest some unobserved sin should provoke the Lord to give him up to a slothful listless frame and spirit. In his diary he sometimes had these words—‘*Leve desiderium ad studendum: ponam ex peccato admissio.*’ Mather’s History of New England, Book iii.

pious uses, and particularly to the great advantage of devotion.’¹

Bishop Burnet indeed has justly observed, ‘that a great measure of piety, with a very small proportion of learning, will carry one a great way.’² Considerable latitude also is required in speaking of the high importance of study. With some the cord must be drawn tight—with others much may be left to the direction of their natural bias. Yet Archbishop Secker’s remark, must, we think, be generally admitted—‘A point of great importance to Clergymen is, that they be studious.’³ Far, very far, would we be from asserting the pre-eminence of theological study to spiritual-mindedness. Yet we cannot expect to see a tone of healthful spirituality, without an industrious habit. The religion of an idler is, to say the least, of a very questionable character; nor can we doubt, that a diligent improvement of inferior talents by study, exercise, and prayer, will be more profitable to their possessor, and serviceable to the Church, than

¹ Boyle’s Reflections, pp. 9, 10. ² Pastoral Care, ch. vii.

³ Secker’s Charges. Mather remarks upon the importance of habits of study—‘There never was an eminent, who was not an industrious man. You must be diligent in your business, if you hope to stand in any desirable circumstance before that Great King, unto whose service you are dedicated.’ Student and Pastor, pp. 195, 196. ‘I have directed close attention to this subject,’ (remarks a professor in an American Theological Seminary,) ‘and the result without one solitary exception is, that I never knew an individual gain any considerable mass of really digested and valuable knowledge, *without unwearied industry.*’ Professor Miller’s Letters on Clerical Habits addressed to a Student in the Seminary at Princeton, N. J. p. 256. It was an excellent reply to a complaint of a bad memory as a discouragement from study; *Lege, lege; aliquid hærebit.* That sentence in Prov. xiv. 13, deserves to be written in letters of gold upon your study table—“In all labour there is profit.” To another young Ministerial student it was said—‘Abhor one hour of idleness, as you would be ashamed of one hour of drunkenness.’—Life of Mr. Thomas Shepard, in Mather’s New England, Book IV.

the gift of superior abilities suffered to slumber for want of use.¹

Different qualifications, however, are required for the improvement of study. Some need great patience. Ardent minds wish, and seem almost to expect, to gain all at once. There is here, as in religion, "a zeal not according to knowledge."—There is too great haste in decision and too little time for weighing, for storing, or for directing the application of our store to the immediate purpose in hand, Hence arises that most injurious habit of skimming over books rather than perusing them. The mind has only hovered upon the surface, and gained but a confused remembrance of passing matter, and an acquaintance with first principles far too imperfect for practical utility.²

¹ "As it is in the body"—observes Mr. Locke—"so it is in the mind: practice makes it what it is; and most even of those excellencies, which are looked on as natural endowments, will be found, when examined into more minutely, to be the product of exercise, and to be raised to that pitch by repeated actions"—Again—"The faculties of the soul are improved and made useful to us, just after the same manner that our bodies are. Would you have a man write or paint well, or perform any other mechanical operation dexterously and with ease; let him have ever so much vigour and activity, suppleness, and address, yet no body expects this from him, unless he has been used to it, and has employed time and pains in fashioning and forming his hand or other parts to these motions. Just so it is in the mind—Would you have a man reason well, you must use him to it betimes, exercise his mind in it." *Conduct of the Understanding.*

² 'Patient application, is literally, every thing. Without it you may have a number of half-formed ideas floating in your mind; but deep, connected, large, and consistent views of any subject you will never gain. Impatient haste is the bane of deep intellectual work. If you are investigating any important doctrine, be not ready to leave it. Come to it again and again; seeking light from every quarter; and perusing with attention the best books, until you have entered, as far as you are capable, into its profoundest merits. And, if compelled by any circumstance to leave the subject before you have reached this point, hold it in reserve for another and more satisfactory examination. In short, let your motto, and, as far as practicable, your habit, be, to leave nothing till you have thoroughly mastered it.' *Professor Miller's Letters*, pp. 256—258.

Some again need discretion in the direction of their study. They lose themselves in the multiplicity of books;¹ and find to their cost, that in *reading* as well as "*making* books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."² Bishop Wilkins observes,—‘ There is as much art and benefit in the right choice of such books, with which we should be most familiar, as there is in the election of other friends or acquaintance, with whom we may most profitably converse.’³ No man can read everything; nor would our real store be increased by the capacity to do so. The digestive powers would be overloaded, for want of time to act, and uncontrolled confusion would reign within.⁴ It is far more easy to furnish our library, than our understanding. A man may have read most extensively upon theological subjects, and yet be a tyro in theology. Professor Campbell re-

¹ *Distrahit animum librorum multitudo. Itaque, cum legere non possis, quantum habueris, sat est habere quantum legas. Sed modo, inquis, hunc librum evolvere volo, modo illum. Fastidientis stomachi est, multa degustare; quæ ubi varia sunt et diversa, coinquant, non alunt. Probatos itaque semper lege; et si quando ad alios divertere libuerit, ad priores redi.* Seneca Ep. i.

² Eccles. xii. 12.

³ Wilkins, Eccl. p. 44. Dr. Watts has remarked,—‘ It is of vast advantage for improvement of knowledge and saving time, for a young man to have the most proper books for his reading, recommended by a judicious friend.’ On the Improvement of the Mind, ch. iv. This and ch. v. abound with most valuable instructions upon Christian study. Professor Franck accompanies the same advice to young students with the following admonitions. ‘ They should read little, but read that little well: they should prefer those works, whose tendency is to lay a solid foundation, and prove them in a sedate and attentive manner; never commencing any other book, until the subject of the former be perfectly understood and digested. If these monitions be neglected, they may become sciolists, but never men of learning; sophists, but never truly wise; the mind will be possessed with an intemperate thirst after “knowledge that puffeth up,” and filled with unholy indifference for “the wisdom which cometh from above.”’ Franck’s Guide to the Reading of the Scriptures, ch. iii.

⁴ See quotation from Seneca, ut supra.

marks, in his forcible manner,—‘ It has been the fault of many ages, and still is of the present age, that to have read much is to be very learned. There is not, I may say, a greater heresy against common-sense. Reading is doubtless necessary ; and it must be owned, that eminence in knowledge is not to be attained without it. But two things are ever specially to be regarded on this topic, which are these : First, that more depends on the quality of what we read, than on the quantity.¹ Secondly, more depends on the use, which, by reflection, conversation, and composition, we have made of what we read, than upon both the former.’² Mr. Fisk’s remark upon Missionary qualifications applies—“ More knowledge of languages should be acquired : I say, *more knowledge* of languages—rather than a

¹ Lectures on Systematic Theology, lect. i. Mr. Locke speaks most excellently to this point—‘ There are fundamental truths, which lie at the bottom, the basis upon which a great many others rest, and in which they have their consistency. These are teeming truths, rich in store, with which they furnish the mind, and, like the lights of heaven, are not only beautiful and entertaining in themselves, but give light and evidence to other things, that without them could not be seen or known. These, and such as these, are the truths we should endeavour to find out and store our minds with.’ Conduct of the Understanding, § 43.

² This has always been the view of the most judicious masters of study. Dr. Watts again observes,—‘ A well-furnished library and a capacious memory are indeed of singular use toward the improvement of the mind ; but if all your learning be nothing else but a mere amassment of what others have written, without a due penetration into its meaning, and without a judicious choice and determination of your own sentiments, I do not see what title your head has to true learning above your shelves.’ On the Improvement of the Mind, ch. i. Thus again Mr. Locke—‘ Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge ; it is thinking makes what we read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections.—There are indeed in some writers instances of deep thought, close and acute reasoning, and ideas well pursued. The light these would give would be of great use, if their reader would observe and imitate them—but that can be done only by our own meditation.’ Conduct of the Understanding, § 43. Lord Bacon’s directions on this matter are replete with admirable wia-

a knowledge of *more languages*.¹ The accuracy of study is of far greater importance than its extent. ‘A little study, *well digested in a good, serious mind*, will go a great way, and will lay in materials for a whole life.’² This intellectual process incorporates the matters of thinking with our own minds—which instead of being pressed down by increase of weight—thus enlarges the powers of receiving and retaining its treasures. Massillon well distinguishes the main requisites of this digestive habit, to be—‘love of study; a desire of becoming useful to our parish; a conviction of the necessity of deriving from prayer that knowledge which study does not afford; of being impressed with a desire of salvation, and of applying all the means of advancing in evangelical wisdom, to inspire our flock with a love of their duty, in order that they may the more easily be induced to prac-

dom:—‘Read not to contradict and refute, nor to believe and take for granted, not to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts of them made by others. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man: and therefore if a man write little, he had need have a good memory; if he confer little, he had need have much cunning, to appear to know what he doth not.’ Mason observes—‘that some books better deserve to be read over ten times, than others once—and recommends the examination of important discussions within the book, as a test of its solid or superficial character.’—Perhaps the periodicals of the present day may prove ensnaring to the studious mind. Though many of them are replete with valuable matter, yet from their slight and discursive character, they should be connected with hours of relaxation rather than with hours of study.

¹ Life of Pliny Fisk, Missionary to Palestine; a most valuable piece of Missionary, and indeed of Ministerial, Biography, p. 25. Mr. Fisk was one of the instances of subsequent conviction of the mistake, that industrious study is inconsistent with ardent practical religion.

² Burnet’s Conclusion to the History of his own times.

tise it: in a word, a sincere desire to fulfil our Ministry.’¹

It is of great moment, that the habit of study should as far as possible be maintained through life. For the most part—the ground work only has been laid. Let our early attainments excite, not satisfy, our thirst for information—divert not bound, our investigations. If useful habits are gained, they are probably far from being matured. St. Paul’s instructions so often alluded to, were given (as we have hinted) to an Elder of some years’ standing in the church. Mr. Scott to the last combined the Student with the Minister.² ‘If we live only on old stores,’ (as a beloved brother has observed)—‘we shall never enlarge our knowledge.’ It is allowed, that it is not easy diligently to pursue a course of persevering study. Our families and our daily duties must not be neglected. It requires fixed plans, vigorously followed up. Our natural indolence, and the love of society, must be broken through. Cecil says—‘Every man, whatever be his natural disposition, who would urge his powers to the highest end, must be a man of solitary studies’³

Yet, after all, the solidly-learned, the studious, and well-furnished man is but the unshapen mass, from which the Christian Minister is formed. The plastic energy—the quickening influence of the Almighty

¹ Massillon’s Charges, p. 222.

² Scott’s Life, pp. 600, 601.

³ Bickersteth’s Christian Hearer, pp. 243, 244. The whole chapter is replete with valuable thought upon Christian study. ‘How few read enough to stock their minds! and the mind is no widow’s cruse, which fills with knowledge as fast as we empty it. Why should a clergyman labour less than a barrister? since, in spiritual things as well as temporal, it is “the hand of the diligent which maketh rich.” Does the conscience, in fact, never whisper upon any topic in theology—“Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?”’ Christian Observer, 1828, p. 420.

Spirit, is still needed to put light, life, and motion into the inert substance, to mould it into the Divine image, and to make it a "vessel of honour meet for the Master's use." Nor must we deny that studious habits are attended with ensnaring temptations.¹ The tree of knowledge may thrive, while the tree of life is languishing. Every enlargement of intellectual knowledge has a natural tendency to self-exaltation. The habit of study must be guarded, lest it should be an unsanctified indulgence; craving to be fed at the expence of conscience or propriety; pre-occupying the time that belongs to immediate duties; or interfering with other avocations of equal or greater moment. Much apprehended danger will however be repelled by the exercise of a sound judgment and a spiritual mind, in directing these studies to the main end of the Ministry. 'Let none of them intrench upon those hours, that should be devoted to our study of the Bible, or our preparation for the pulpit. And wheresoever we find our inclination too much attached to any particular human science, let us set a guard upon ourselves, lest it rob us of divine studies, and our best improvement. A Minister should remember, that himself with all his studies is consecrated to the service of the sanctuary. Let every thing be done therefore with a view to one great end—and let us pursue every part of science with a design to gain better qualifications thereby for our sacred work.'²

¹ See some valuable remarks on this subject in Bickersteth's *Christian Student*, chap. viii.

² Watt's *Humble Endeavour for a Revival*, pp. 17, 18. How closely did Henry Martyn live in the spirit of this caution—'May I be taught to remember, that all other studies are merely subservient to the great work of ministering holy things to immortal souls. May the most holy works of the Ministry, and those which require most devotedness of soul, be the most dear to my heart.' *Martyn's Life*, p. 269.

This section cannot be better concluded than with Quesnel's exposition of the text, which has formed its basis.—'Not to read or study at all, is to tempt God: to do nothing but study, is to forget the Ministry: to study, only to glory in one's knowledge, is a shameful vanity: to study, in search of the means to flatter sinners, a deplorable prevarication: But to store one's mind with the knowledge proper to the saints by study and by prayer, and to diffuse that knowledge in solid instructions and practical exhortations,—this is to be a prudent, zealous, and laborious Minister.¹

¹ It may be important to add to this Section the course of study for proficiency in the Christian Ministry, pursued by one of the most profound Theologians of his or of any age. 'My method of study' (President Edwards informs us,) 'from my first beginning the work of the Ministry, has been very much by writing; applying myself in this way to improve every important hint; pursuing the clue to the utmost, when any thing in reading, meditation, or conversation has been suggested to my mind, that seemed to promise light in any weighty point; thus penning what appeared to me my best thoughts on innumerable subjects, for my own benefit. The longer I prosecuted my studies in this method, the more habitual it became, and the more pleasant and profitable I found it. The further I travelled in this way, the more and wider the field opened: which has occasioned my laying out many things in my mind to do in this manner, (if God should spare my life,) which my heart hath been much set upon.' *Edwards' Life, Works*, pp. 79, 80. Cecil's important rule seems however to be necessary for the profitable application of this or of any other course of study—'Every man should aim to do one thing well. If he dissipates his attention on several objects, he may have excellent talents intrusted to him, but they will be intrusted to no good end. Concentrated on his proper object, they might have vast energy; but dissipated on several, they will have none. Let other objects be pursued indeed; but only so far as they may subserve the reader's purpose. By neglecting this rule, I have seen frivolity and futility written on minds of great power; and by regarding it, I have seen very limited minds acting in the first rank of their profession. I have seen a large capital and a great stock dissipated; and I have seen a small capital and stock improved to great riches.'

SECTION II.

SPECIAL STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THE connexion of this Section with the preceding, is peculiarly important. Habits of General study, however well regulated and perseveringly maintained, will reflect no light or spiritual apprehension of the Gospel, independent of the special study of the sacred volume. Nor is it sufficient merely to combine these courses of study. Their connexion is not that of *equality*, but of the direct *subserviency* of General study to this specific purpose—a more enlightened and fruitful study of the word of God.¹ The intellectual excitement of literary or theological study needs much watchfulness lest it should deaden the freshness of our mind to the more spiritual study of the Scriptures.²

¹ 'I read other books,' (Philip Henry would say,) 'that I may be the better able to understand the Scripture.' Again—'Prefer having eyes to read the Scripture, and be blind to every thing else, rather than to read every thing else and neglect the Bible.' Life p. 24, 206. 'Study close,' (said his excellent son, addressing young Ministers) 'study close; especially make the Bible your study. There is no knowledge, which I am more desirous to increase in than that. Men get wisdom by books, but wisdom towards God is to be gotten out of God's book; and that by *digging*. Most men do but walk over the surface of it, and pick up here and there a flower. Few dig into it. Read over other books to help you to understand *that book*. Fetch your prayers and sermons from thence. The volume of inspiration is a full fountain, ever overflowing, and hath always something new.' M. Henry's Life, Williams's edition, p. 222.

² Martyn appears to have been most tenderly susceptible upon this point. 'So deep was his veneration for the word of God, that, when a suspicion arose in his mind, that any other book he might be studying, was about to gain an undue influence on his affections, he *instantly* laid it aside; nor would he resume it, till he had felt and realized the paramount excellence of the Divine oracles. He could not rest satisfied, till all those lesser lights, that were beginning to dazzle him, had disappeared before the effulgence of the Scriptures.' Life, p. 59.

We must be careful also, that our studies draw us to the Bible, and that we draw our studies to the Bible—instead of merely drawing the Bible to our studies, in which case they will be worse than unprofitable. ‘When commencing the study of *Divine truth* amid all the jarring opinions of human authors, it is of inexpressible moment to begin with studying the pure word of God, and to go regularly through the whole of that word, before we prepossess our minds with human opinions. While continuing the study of *Divine truth*, it is also of vast moment to keep up the daily reading of considerable portions of the pure word of God, and so to keep Scriptural truth (as it has been observed) continually revolving in the mind. It will be the only effective preservative against the taint and deterioration, which the mind might otherwise receive from reading human authors.’¹

The Bible then must be, in a true Protestant sense, the *Liber Sacerdotalis*.² As no one can pretend to be a Christian without a competent acquaintance with it, so no one can be qualified for the sacred office without such an accurate and spiritual insight into its contents, as shall prove him to be, like Ezra, “a ready scribe in the law,”—not only “a faithful man,” but “able to teach others also.”³ ‘It is of the Gospel,’ (Arch-

¹ Bickersteth’s *Christian Hearer*, p. 232.

² ‘The chief and top of the knowledge of the ‘Country Parson,’ consists in the Book of Books, the storehouse and magazine of life and comfort—the *Holy Scriptures*.’ Herbert’s *Parson*, Chap. iv. ‘A book,’ (as Isaac Walton remarks in his characteristic style) ‘so full of plain, prudent, and useful rules, that the Country Parson, that can spare twelve pence, and yet wants it, is scarcely excusable; because it will both direct him what he ought to do, and convince him for not having done it.’

³ Ezra vii. 6. 2 Tim. ii. 2. It is needless to allude to the great advantage resulting from the knowledge of the original languages of Scripture, and to the powerful motives, that urge us to the study of them. Apart from the interest of this study—it is most

bishop Secker reminded his clergy) ‘that you are ministers; all other learning will leave you essentially unqualified; and this alone, (the doctrine and precepts of the Gospel) comprehends every thing that is necessary.’ With this end he recommends a diligent perusal of the Holy Scriptures.¹ Indeed, if the Bible be the fountain of light and truth, it is impossible to distinguish light from darkness, or truth from error in human writings, without an enlightened and enlarged apprehension of the word of God. By this touchstone we must “prove all things,” so as to “hold fast that which is good.”²

But we want a study—a searching into the Scriptures—the patient investigating spirit of the miner digging into hidden treasure.³ Some with good intentions and competent capacities, are in danger of becoming crude and inexperienced throughout their course, by substituting warm impressions of Scripture for that close study of its sacred contents, which can alone form a solid and efficient Ministry. ‘In general,’ (Mr. Scott remarks) ‘I have found it advantageous sometimes to read the Scriptures with such exactness, as to weigh every expression, and the connexion, as if I were about to preach upon every verse; and then to apply the result to my own case, character, experience,

desirable amidst the conflicting opinions of commentators to arrive at an intelligent and satisfactory judgment from our own resources.

¹ Secker’s Charges, p. 267.

² 1 Thess. v. 21. ‘I find,’ (said President Edwards,) ‘it would be very much to my advantage to be thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. When I am reading doctrinal books, or books of controversy, I can proceed with abundantly more confidence, and can see upon what foundation I stand.’ Life, Works, Vol. i. p. 24.

³ Prov. ii. 4. John v. 39. See Matthew Henry’s Counsel *ut supra*, and compare the account of Zwingle’s diligent study of the Scriptures in Scott’s Continuation of Milner, Vol. ii. Part ii.

and conduct, as if it had been directly addressed to me—in short—to make the passages into a kind of sermons, as if about to preach to others, and then to turn the whole application on myself, as far as suited to my case. At other times I have read a passage more generally, and then selected two or three of the most important observations from it, and endeavoured to employ my mind in meditation on them, and consider how they bore on the state of my heart, or on my past life, or on those things which I heard or observed, in the world or the Church, and to compare them with the variety of sentiments, experiences, conducts, or prominent characters, with which we become gradually more and more acquainted.¹ It is most important also, that our research should compass, as far possible, the whole extent of the mine. The wise scattering of the truth over the whole surface of Scripture is far more adapted to the ends of instruction, than would have been a compression of its component parts within their several departments. None of us probably are wholly free from undue partialities; and, had our favourite doctrines been concentrated in particular divisions of the volume, an exclusive or disproportioned attention to those parts would have contracted our views of the whole system. The present disposition of truth, however, compels us to study the whole volume; and thus, by considering the whole mind of God, our views are extended to the length and breadth of the land, while we insensibly imbibe more of the enlarged spirit of the Divine revelation.

Perhaps the Pentateuch, the Prophecies, and the Epistles, may be marked out as the peculiar subjects of study. *On the Pentateuch*—Dean Graves's Lec-

¹ *Life*, p. 328, 329.

tures may be referred to for much valuable criticism and information, equally illustrative of the wisdom and of the difficulties of the Mosaic code. Faber's *Horæ Mosaicæ* opens a diversified, instructive, and Christian view of this sacred field. *On the Prophecies*, Bishop Newton's Dissertations are full of important illustration respecting fulfilled Prophecy. Davison's Lectures lay open the scheme with much solid, serious, and original contemplation. After all that has been written in the present day upon unfulfilled prophecy, upon different principles of interpretation, (and not always with suitable humility, forbearance, and patience,) a dark cloud still hangs over the development of the prospects of the Christian Church in the prophetic page. Faber's "Sacred Calendar of Prophecy," will however be deemed on all sides worthy of an attentive perusal, though serious doubts will be entertained on particular parts of his system. A comparison of the different chains of prophecy in the sacred volume in a simple, dependent, investigating spirit, would open a most interesting and profitable course of study, to which indeed the signs of the present times most imperiously call us. *The Epistles*, in some respects, may be considered the most important portion of Scripture to the Ministerial Student. Hence he will gather connected systems of Christian instruction—both as respects the foundation and the superstructure. Perhaps Scott's Commentary—with as large a selection of his references as may be practicable—may be regarded upon the whole as the best source of solid Scriptural instruction upon the grand subjects discussed by the different inspired writers.

The importance of Scriptural research is sufficiently obvious from our obligation to 'keep back nothing

that is profitable unto' the people.¹ Adults must be fed as well as babes. Those, that have successfully exercised the diligence of faith, must not be hindered in their advance to higher attainments by being bound up in the same line and measure with others, who with the same advantages have come short. The main design of the Ministry is (according to the original design) to carry our people forward to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."² The exposition, therefore, of "the deep things of God," with reverential modesty, is included in our commission, and demands a deep and accurate study of the volume of Revelation; while the difficulties, which yet remain, and will remain to the end, are among the most profitable fruits of research, in the exercise of subjection to the authority of Scripture, and of habitual dependance upon Divine teaching for necessary instruction.

Professor Franck's Guide to the Reading of the Scriptures gives most admirable rules for the intelligent, devotional, and practical study of the Scripture. Mr. Horne's Introduction to the Scriptures furnishes also a valuable digest of thoughtful matter.³ We need only remark upon a submission of soul to the word, as the requisite preparation for admittance into this treasure of sacred truth—where, if some should enrich themselves with larger stores than others, the lowest possessor of a simple and dependent spirit will realize a most valuable blessing.

¹ Acts xx. 20.

² Eph. iv. 12. Col. i. 28.

³ Vol. ii. Part ii. Mr. Dodwell judiciously recommends to make the Bible the common-place book for all our other studies. (*Letters of Advice*, p. 235.) Philip Henry in his preparatory Ministerial study used an interleaved Bible for short notes upon Scripture—a plan, which he recommended to his young men, adding, that such expositions and observations are more happy and considerable sometimes than those that are found in the professed commentators. "I profess," (he would say) "to teach no other learning but Scripture learning." *Life*, p. 206.

appears to be the only profitable and safe use of commentaries. We thus avail ourselves freely of all the store of wisdom within our reach, while at the same time our "faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."¹

To illustrate the importance of this principle—Suppose a Theological student of ardent mind, but with uninformed or unfixed Biblical principles, to sit down to Poole's invaluable Synopsis, or even to make it a book of frequent reference; this digest of *Critici Sacri* would soon prove to him a *Sylva Critica*. He would find opinions successively overthrown, which had passed before him with more or less conviction. Or—more frequently, two conflicting sets of opinion would demand his attention, while, being without an umpire to decide between them—his judgment (if indeed he were able to form any under such circumstances) would be formed with hesitation, or taken up in haste or partiality, rather than as the result of deliberate and enlightened conviction. Or suppose him to have heard much commendation of Mr. Scott's Commentary, or his *General Views of Theology*. He knows them to have given an influential tone to the religion of his day. He reads them with avidity,—he receives them as the standard of orthodoxy—and feels himself impregnably entrenched in the strong positions of Scripture truth. But he may hear Mr. Scott's principles controverted with considerable force and subtlety of argument, and *apparently* upon an equal basis of Scriptural authority. Now, if his mind has not been exercised in the field of Holy Writ, he will be incompetent to bring the opposing dogmas to an infallible standard

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 5.

—by comparing them respectively with the analogy of faith; and therefore, (though from partiality, respect, or hesitating conviction he may still maintain his ground) his basis of truth—not having been fixed upon the sole and immoveable rock of the Bible—will be materially shaken. His standard (if he should be “a standard-bearer”) will be lifted up with a feeble and trembling hand; and his system of Ministration will bear too strong marks of indecision, to afford any sanguine prospect of efficiency.¹

¹ The principle of this course of spiritual reading is excellently illustrated by the habit of the venerable writer just referred to—‘Having perhaps heard or read the opinions of different men on any disputed subject, I have, in my daily reading of the Scriptures, constantly kept those opinions in view, that I might at length form my judgment on which side truth lay. In doing this, I have always aimed to keep my mind from the two extremes—on the one hand, of giving up my own opinion, from a kind of false humility, and deference for men, without being previously convinced that I had been mistaken: and, on the other hand, of assuming my opinion to be truth, so as to exclude light, especially if it came from an enemy, or a person not entitled to much deference. So that I have always aimed to be open to conviction; to bring every man’s probable opinion to the touchstone, and to give it a fair trial, if not tried before; but not to receive it, without plainly perceiving its agreement with the Scripture; and at the same time to aim, that my heart might be suitably affected with the conclusions of my understanding—in which I have principally failed.’ *Scott’s Life*, pp. 329, 330, and some valuable remarks of his son in enforcing this peculiar feature of his father’s example, pp. 667, 668.

Upon the same principles Archbishop Usher gave the following wise instructions to young Ministers.

‘1. Read and study the Scriptures carefully, wherein is the *best learning, and only infallible truth*. They can furnish you with the best materials for your sermons: *the only rules of faith and practice*; the most powerful motives to persuade and convince the conscience; and the strongest arguments to confute all errors, heresies, and schisms.

‘2. *Take not hastily up with other men’s opinions without due trial, nor vent your own conceits, but compare them first with the analogy of faith, and rules of holiness, recorded in the Scriptures, which are the proper tests of all opinions and doctrines.*’ *Life of Usher*, by his Chaplain, Dr. Parr, prefixed to his valuable *Collection of Letters*, p. 87.

scriptures he will feel himself, (as Witsius says) ‘like a blind man contemplating the heavens’—or as when the world in its original confusion “was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” God must speak to his heart—“Let there be light;” and “for this he will be inquired of to do it unto him.”

In calculating the cost of the work—(the Ministerial exercises of faith and patience superadded to the daily difficulties of the Christian life)—what an awakening call is there for prayer, for additional supplies of heavenly influence—that his knowledge may grow “unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding”—that his heart may be constrained to a cheerful and ready obedience—that all his powers may be consecrated to this sole object—and that the whole work of preparation may be sealed by an abundant blessing. George Herbert justly remarks of ‘some in a preparatory way,’ that their ‘aim and labour must be, not only to get knowledge, but to subdue and mortify all lusts and affections, and not to think, that, when they have read the fathers or school-men, a Minister is made, and the thing done. *The greatest and hardest preparation is within.*’¹ And indeed *hic labor—hoc opus est*. To bring the heart to the work and to keep it there—to exchange the indulgence of ease for

improved his talent. Mr. Scott bears the same testimony—Speaking of his Scriptural studies, he adds—‘But a spirit of continual prayer, mixed with reading, has been my principal help in all these things.’ Life, p. 330. Quesnel, speaking of the importance of the study of the Scriptures to the Christian Minister, adds—‘He must learn them otherwise than by study. The unction of the Spirit is a great master in this science, and it is by prayer that we become his scholars. Much prayer and little study advance the work of God more than abundance of study without prayer.’ On John vii. 17.

¹ Country Parson, chap. ii.

may recommend itself by the appearance of the most sublime wisdom, or rest upon ancient tradition, consent of learned men, or the weight of plausible argument, is vain, futile, and, in short, a very lie. "To the law and to the testimony. If any one speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Let the Theologian delight in these sacred oracles : let him exercise himself in them day and night ; let him meditate in them ; let him live in them ; let him draw all his wisdom from them ; let him compare all his thoughts with them ; let him embrace nothing in religion which he does not find here. Let him not bind his faith to a man—nor to a Prophet, Apostle, or even an Angel himself, as if the dictum of either man or angel were to be the rule of faith. Let his whole ground of faith be in God alone. For it is a Divine, not a human faith, which we learn and teach ; so pure that it can rest upon no ground but the authority of God, who is never false, and never can deceive. The attentive study of the Scriptures has a sort of constraining power. It fills the mind with the most splendid form of heavenly truth, which it teaches with purity, solidity, certainty, and without the least mixture of error. It soothes the mind with an inexpressible sweetness ; it satisfies the sacred hunger and thirst for knowledge with flowing rivers of honey and butter ; it penetrates into the innermost heart with irresistible influence ; it imprints its own testimony so firmly upon the mind, that the believing soul rests upon it with the same security, as if it had been carried up into the third heaven, and heard it from God's own mouth ; it touches all the affections, and breathes the sweetest fragrance of holiness upon the pious reader, even though he may not perhaps comprehend the full extent of his reading. We can scarcely

their work (unconsciously indeed to themselves) by their Master's retirement for the continuance of a whole night of prayer to God.¹ With the same holy preparation the first Missionaries to the Gentiles were sent forth ;² and thus—instead of “ returning (like the nobles of Judah) with their vessels empty, ashamed and confounded, and covering their heads ”³—they gladdened the hearts of their brethren with tidings of the great things “ that God had done with them.”⁴ Indeed an entrance upon this great work without the spirit of prayer, would be to “ go a ” most fearful “ warfare at our own charges.” The kingdom of Satan would have little to apprehend from an attack of literature, or from any systematic mechanism of external form. The outworks might be stormed, but the citadel would remain impregnable. “ The prey ” will never be “ taken from the mighty, nor the lawful captives delivered,” by any other power than the Ministry of the Gospel clothed with Almighty energy. By this means the first attack was made by the servants of Christ, waiting in earnest prayer for the fulfilment of the faithful promises.⁵ The Christian Ministry is a work of faith ; and that it may be a work of faith, it must be a work of prayer. Prayer obtains faith, while faith in its reaction quickens to increasing earnestness of prayer. Thus spiritual, enlightened, and encouraging views of the Ministry flow from the habit of diligent waiting on God. We may therefore safely conclude with Bernard,—‘ *Utilis lectio,—utilis eruditio—sed magis necessaria unctio, quippe quæ docet de omnibus.*’

If then the candidate for the Christian Ministry

¹ Luke vi. 12—16.

² Acts xiii. 2, 3.

³ Jer. xiv. 3.

⁴ Acts xiv. 27 ; xv. 3, 4.

⁵ Ib. i. 8, 14, with ii. 1.

should never bow his knee, without making the momentous work before him a subject of large supplication, he will do well. But if he should add to his customary times of prayer seasons of retirement, consecrated to the sole purpose of contemplating the work, and separating himself to its service, he will do better. A man of special prayer will be a man of special faith : and faith is the power, which enables "the worm to thresh the mountains,"¹ and, in holy confidence, to cast them down before him—"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."²

SECTION IV.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE CURE OF SOULS.

"EXERCISE thyself unto godliness"³—was one of the wise rules of the Apostle to his beloved son, for the course of his Ministry; a rule, which bears with most important application to the noviciate. Its connexion with the rule of study in the succeeding context is worthy of remark. "Giving attendance to reading," without the active exercises of the sacred employment, would form a most incomplete and inefficient ministry. The want of exercise is as hurtful to the spiritual as to the bodily system; nor will studious habits circulate with beneficial influence, unless their results are operative in Christian activity. The Apostle allowed no entrance into the lowest department of the Ministry, without a period of probation.⁴ Natural capacity and spiritual qualifications,

¹ Isa. xli. 14, 15.² Zech. iv. 6.³ 1 Tim. iv. 7.⁴ Ib. iii. 10.

as well as personal consistency, must be put to the trial, before even the deacons could "use their office" in the Church. Now, though no man can take the sacred office unto himself, until he be solemnly called to it by the Church, yet there is much subordinate employment in the cure of souls, that may legitimately exercise the natural capacities of the young probationer, increase his store of experience, and impart considerable benefit to the Church, and reciprocal advantage to himself. *The superintendence of a Sunday-school* is an employment from which many have drawn most valuable lessons of practical utility in the future exercise, and during the whole course of their Ministry. *The instruction of the poor* (whether in the way of casual intercourse, or with more or less of system) may be conducted with Christian humility, perseverance, and love, without infringement on the peculiar claims and character of the Ministry. And perhaps more preparation for future usefulness may be gathered from this employment, than from many months of contemplative study. An insight into the real condition of the future subjects of the parochial Ministration, and the acquaintance with their modes of expression, their peculiar difficulties and temptations, the causes of their ignorance, the wisest and most successful avenues of approach to them—this is knowledge, in which it would be well to be initiated, before the solemn obligation is undertaken; and the defect of which gives a *general*, and *therefore unimpressive*, character to the early ministrations of many excellent pastors. The best sermons composed in the study, must, under such circumstances, necessarily fail in adaptation to the wants and circumstances of their people; as exhibiting a want of sympathy in their distresses—a want of consideration of their

ignorance—a want of accuracy in drawing the lines of character, and consequently in directing our “doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness” to the precise cases of just application. The *visitation of the sick* also, in the exercise of Christian sympathy, is of the highest importance to the probationer for the Ministry. Lessons are learned here, that could never be learned in the study. *There* the importance of the Gospel may be described or contemplated—*here* it is realized. *There* recollections may be digested with seriousness and accuracy of the vanity of the world, the nearness and prospects of eternity, the danger of delay, the blessedness of preparation, the deceitfulness of the heart, the power of Satan, the grace and love of the Saviour;—*here* the scenes are before the eye. Oh! how much “better is it to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting!”¹ How important is the observant study of the sick chamber! How responsible is a frequent attendance upon it! How fruitful are the instructions connected with it! How varied and direct their bearing upon every department of public and private Ministration! Many have been trained for important usefulness in the Church by frequent, and, in many instances, painful attendance, upon this school of instruction.²

The Ministry is not (like some branches of natural

¹ Eccles. vii. 2.

² ‘One of the best universities, and one far too much unvisited, is the retired apartment of suffering poverty, the cottage or the garret of the afflicted; and one of the best lectures in divinity, and most fruitful of Christian conferences, is conversation on the things of God with those “poor of this world,” whom “God hath chosen rich in faith. Many a Minister has there first learned the lesson of saving knowledge for his own soul, and thence has carried the best lessons, which he could give to his people.’ Bickersteth’s Christian Student, p. 37.

science,) a work of contemplation, but of active, anxious, devoted employment. The spirit, business, and delight of doing good must therefore form an essential part of Preparation for the work. It would be well indeed, if the disciple of the Ministry was never obliged to say—'Perdidi diem.' It would probably be wise to act as much as possible upon system, grounded upon a deep sense of personal neglect, strengthened by incessant prayer, and maintained by a course of persevering effort. Let him begin with his own family. Let him place their individual cases before him for distinct consideration and prayer—then pass on to neighbours, friends, societies, with which he may be more or less connected, and with all of whom his connexion is most responsible. The diligent cultivation of the most contracted sphere will furnish abundant employ for his exertions. There are neighbours to be instructed—the sick to be visited—the young to be won over to the ways of God. Opportunities daily press before him, which are as "the price in the hands of a fool that hath no heart" to improve them, but which to him are treasures of inestimable price, and talents of most solemn account. The circle of influence, and the field of opportunity, will probably extend in proportion to the improvement bestowed upon them; while, even within the smallest limits, there will be sufficient exercise of faith, prayer, and labour to serve the important purpose of Ministerial preparation; and "he that is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in much." ¹

The present subject suggests the remark, that a very rapid transition from the studies of the University to the services of the Sanctuary, does not often appear desir-

¹ Luke xvi. 10.

able. At least, where these studies have been vigorously pursued, surely some interval of active (*not monastic*) retirement is needed to divert the mind from its former course into a more observant and consecrated habit of action. The schools of Plato and Newton will discipline the mind into most useful Ministerial habits, and furnish many important lessons of instruction. But their influence upon the general character is far too remote for immediate practical purposes. They supply no direct materials, whether of observation or of experience, for the rudiments of the Ministry. A course of probationary exercise upon a spiritual system, preparatory to Ordination, would be a most desirable appendage to our National Establishment. In defect of this advantage, an interval of inspection or initiation into the routine of the work under the superintendance of a judicious and experienced Pastor, might prove a commencing era of Ministerial fruitfulness. The opportunities afforded of learning would be the best preparation for teaching. Converse with experienced and exercised Christians would offer many advantages.¹ The habit of religious conversation would contribute, even more than private study, to the enlargement of the mind; and much would be acquired in this field of observation and incipient engagements, which no other medium could adequately supply.²

¹ Amongst which Dr. Doddridge enumerates—1. Increase to our own stock of knowledge. 2. Excitement to our own spirits: 3. The conciliation of respect among them: 4. The forming of an experimental strain of preaching. See his Lectures on Preaching.

² President Edwards remarks in his Diary,—‘More than ever convinced of the usefulness of religious conversation. I find by conversing on natural philosophy, I gain knowledge abundantly faster, and see the reason of things much clearer than in private study. Wherefore, resolved earnestly to seek at all times for religious conversation, and for those persons that I can with profit, delight, and freedom so converse with.’ Works, i. 25.



PART II.

GENERAL CAUSES OF THE WANT OF SUCCESS IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE prophet's complaint—"Who hath believed our report"¹—has applied to every successive Ministry in the Church. It was echoed in reference even to the Ministry of Him, who "spake as never man spake;" who retained a listening multitude hanging upon his lips, and "wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth."² It was again repeated under the Apostolic dispensation, clothed as it was "with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power."³ And it has ever since been expressive of the experience of faithful labourers in the Lord's harvest. A young Minister indeed—speaking his message from the feeling of a full heart, and without an accurate calculation of the cost—may anticipate a cordial conviction and reception of the truth, as the almost immediate result. But painful experience will always correct such unwarranted expectations. The power of Satan, the current of sin, and the course of this world—all combine to impress our work with the character of a special conflict. But, as complaint should lead to inquiry (and surely no inquiry can be more important), we will proceed to mark a few of the more general causes, that operate unfavourably upon our work.

¹ Isa. liii. 1.

² John xii. 37, 38.

³ Rom. x. 16.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCRIPTURAL WARRANT AND CHARACTER OF
MINISTERIAL SUCCESS—TOGETHER WITH THE
SYMPTOMS OF WANT OF SUCCESS.

A FEW remarks upon these preliminary topics will introduce the discussion of the general subject.

I. It may be laid as the ground of our inquiry—that *the warrant of Ministerial success is sure.* It rests not upon any efforts of human wisdom, zeal, or suasion, but upon the “word for ever settled in heaven.” Every fertilizing shower is the renewed symbol and pledge of the Divine promise.¹ Fruitfulness ever attended the labours of the Old Testament Ministers.² It was the end of the ordination of the first Christian Ministers.³ It is the seal affixed to Ministerial devotedness.⁴ The terms of the promise are most express.⁵ The day of Pentecost exhibited the first instance of its faithfulness;⁶ and the apostles ever afterwards (whether preaching to persecuting Jews, or to blind idolators) found the same seal of their apostleship⁷—so that, wherever the Gospel was sent, and as long as it was continued, the work of success invariably proceeded.⁸

Now, as bearing the same commission, we have the same warrant, of success—the sure foundation of “the word of the Lord,” which “endureth for ever.” The

¹ See Isa. lv. 10, 11.

² See Mal. ii. 6. Compare Jer. xxiii. 22.

³ See John xv. 16.

⁴ See 1 Tim. iv. 16.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 20.

⁶ Acts ii. 37—47.

⁷ At Antioch, Acts xi. 21; xiii. 48. Philippi, xvi. 14, 34. Thessalonica, xvii. 4, 5. Athens, 32—34. Corinth, xviii. 8. 1 Cor. ix. 2. 2 Cor. iii. 1—3. Ephesus, xix. 17—20. Rome, xxviii. 24. The edification of the Churches, xvi. 4, 5. ⁸ Ibid xviii. 9, 10.

Divine Sovereignty (to which we would bow with the most implicit and adoring subjection) is the righteous government of a faithful God. We must not therefore place his sovereignty in opposition to his faithfulness. A measure of success is assured to our work. Some seed shall fall on the good ground, as well as by the way-side, or upon the stony or thorny soil.¹ "There shall" at least "be an *handful* of corn in the earth on the top of the mountains."² The purpose is beyond all the powers of earth and hell to defeat. "All that the Father giveth me *shall come* to me."³ The promise is sealed to the exercise of faith; though the distribution of it *in measure* is often marked by an unsearchable, but infinitely wise and gracious, appointment.

II. In marking the specific *character of this warranted success*, we may observe that *visible success is various*. There are some that plant—others that water⁴—some that lay the foundation—others that build upon it.⁵ Yet all have their testimony. Thus success is not limited to the work of conversion. Where therefore the Ministry fails to convert, we may still be assured, that it convinces, reproveth, exhorts, enlightens, or consoles, some one in some measure at all times. It never "returns to God void," when delivered in the simplicity of faith; nor will it, under the most unpromising circumstances, fail of accomplishing the Divine purpose.

But we must remember also, that present success is not *always visible*. There may be solid work advancing under ground, without any sensible ex-

¹ Matt. xiii. 3—8.

² Psalm lxxii. 16.

³ John vi. 37.

⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 6.

⁵ Ibid. 10.

⁶ St. Paul longed to impart to his Roman and Thessalonian Churches spiritual establishment and consolation. Rom. i. 11, 12
1 Thess. iii. 21, 24.

citement.¹ We are not always the best judges of the results of our Ministry. Mr Scott thus encourages a clergyman from his own Ministerial experience: 'My prevalent opinion is, *that you are useful, but do not see the effect.* Even at Ravenstone, I remember complaining in a New Year's Sermon, that for a whole twelvemonth I had seen no fruit of my preaching; yet it appeared within the course of the next twelvemonth, that not less than ten or twelve had been brought to "consider their ways" during that discouraging year; besides others, I trust, that I did not know of.'² The sick bed also frequently brings to light much unexpected fruit of our work. Much besides is probably hidden from us, from a wise and tender regard to the susceptibility of our hearts to self-elevating temptations.

Symptoms of success are also frequently mistaken. They are at best but doubtful signs—if our people crowd upon us to hear the word³—if they love our persons⁴—admire our discourses⁵—and are brought to a general confession of sinfulness,⁶ or to a temporary interest in our message.⁷—Nor must we on the other hand too hastily conclude upon their apparent want of diligence in the means of grace, or of interest in our parochial system. Family hindrances or outward crosses may restrain the improvement of Christian privileges. The want of tact—the influence of retired habits, or the necessary demands upon exertions in this personal sphere—may impede communications with our plans—so that in many instances Christian consistency is maintained without an exciting profession. The complaint of Ministerial inefficiency

¹ See Mark iv. 26. Luke xvii. 24.

² Scott's Life, p. 387.

³ See Matt. iii. 5.

⁴ Gal. iv. 14—16.

⁵ Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

⁶ Matt. iii. 6, 7.

⁷ John v. 35.

may therefore sometimes be unwarranted — as the disappointment of a too sanguine mind — and the failure of efforts calculated upon in our own wisdom, and attempted in our own strength — or the blast of expectations indulged without due consideration of a Scriptural basis, or of individual or local difficulties.

Ministerial success must also be viewed, as *extending beyond present appearances*. Of the prophets of old “that saying was true; One soweth, and another reapeth;” they sowed the seed, and the Apostles reaped the harvest — As our Lord reminded them — “Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.” And is it no ground of comfort, that our work may be the seed-time of a future harvest? Or, should we neglect to sow, because we may not reap the harvest? Shall we not share the joy of the harvest, even though we be not the immediate reapers of the field? ¹ Is it not sufficient encouragement to “cast our bread upon the waters,” that “we shall find it *after many days*.” “In the morning” (as the wise man exhorts us,) “sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that; or whether they both shall be alike good.” ²

It has been admirably observed on this subject — ‘In order to prevent perpetual disappointment, we must learn to extend our views. To seek for the real harvest produced by spiritual labours only in their immediate and visible results, would be not less absurd, than to take our measure of infinite space from that limited prospect, which the mortal eye can reach; or to estimate the never-ending ages of eternity by a transitory moment of present time — It often happens,

¹ See John iv. 36—38.

² Eccles. xi. 1, 6.

that God withholds his blessing for a time, in order that, when the net is cast in "on the right side," it may be clearly seen, that "the multitude of fishes" inclosed are of the Lord's giving; lest men should attribute their success to a wrong cause, and should "sacrifice unto their own net, and burn incense unto their own drag."¹

Yet must there be expectancy as well as patience. The warrant of success is assured—not only as regards an outward reformation—but a spiritual change of progressive and universal influence. The fruit of Ministerial labour is not indeed always visible in its symptoms—nor immediate in its results. Faith and patience will be exercised—sometimes severely so. But after a pious-taking, weeping seed-time, we shall bring our sheaves with rejoicing, and lay them upon the altar of God, "that the offering up of them might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."² Meanwhile we must beware of saying—"Let him make speed and hasten his work, that we may see it."³ The measure and the time are with the Lord. We must let him alone with his own work. Ours is the care of service—His is the care of success.⁴ "The

¹ Bishop of Winchester on the Ministerial Character of Christ, pp. 426, 429. Thus Calvin remarks on the parable of the seed cast into the ground—'Christ seemeth earnestly to apply his speech to the Ministers of his word, lest they should wax cold in their offices, because their fruit doth not presently appear. Therefore he setteth before them the husbandmen to follow, which in hope of a time to reap do "cast the seed into the earth," and are not vexed with greediness which never is at quiet; but they go to rest, and arise again; that is, they do ordinarily apply their daily labour, and refresh themselves with their nightly rest, until the corn wax ripe at length in the due time. Therefore, though the seed of the word lie hid for a time, as if it were choked or drowned, yet Christ commandeth the godly teachers to be of good comfort, lest distrust should abate their diligence.' On Mark iv. 26.

² Psalm cxxvi. 5, 6. Rom. xv. 16.

³ Isa. v. 19.

⁴ In cœlo cathedram habet, qui corda movet. Augustine.

Lord of the harvest" must determine, when, and what, and where the harvest shall be.

III. But notwithstanding this justly warranted expectation, the *want of Ministerial success* is most extensively and mournfully felt. We are sometimes ready to believe, and to complain, that none labour so unfruitfully as ourselves. Men of the world expect their returns in some measure proportioned to their labour. Alas! with us, too often, "is our strength labour and sorrow;" and at best attended with a very scanty measure of effect; and we are compelled to realize the awful sight of immortal souls perishing under our very eye; dead to the voice of life and love, and madly listening to the voice, that plunges them into perdition!

It may however be well to state a few of the most decisive symptoms of this unfruitfulness. When our public services are unprofitable;¹ when "iniquity abounds," and the mass of our people continue in an impenitent and ungodly state;² when there is an unconcern among us for the honour and cause of God;³ when there is a general want of appetite for the "sincere milk of the word,"⁴ and the public worship of the Sabbath and the weekly lecture (if there be any,) are but thinly attended; when there are no instances of conversion in our Sunday Schools, and but few of our young people are drawn into the "ways of pleasantness and peace;" when the children of deceased Christian parents, instead of being added spiritually to the church, continue in and of the world;⁵ when small addition⁶ is made to the select

¹ Isaiah lxiv. 7. Matt. xiii. 14, 15.

² Isaiah lix. 1—15. Jer. v. xxiii. 10, &c.

³ Hag. i. 4—10.

⁴ Num. xxi. 5. 2 Tim. iv. 3.

⁵ 2 Chron. xviii. 1; xix. 2. Ezra ix. 2.

⁶ Acts ii. 47.

flock, who *truly* commemorate the death of their Saviour in the Holy Sacrament—these and similar appearances may well agitate the question with most anxious concern—“Is the Lord among us or not?”¹ Symptoms so dark and discouraging loudly call for increasing earnestness of supplication—“Oh! that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence! O Lord, revive thy work!”²

Among the more general causes of this failure, we may mark the withholding of Divine influence—the enmity of the natural heart—the power of Satan—local hinderances—and the want of clearness in the Ministerial call. Each of these will now come before us.

CHAPTER II.

THE WITHHOLDING OF DIVINE INFLUENCE THE MAIN CAUSE OF THE WANT OF MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.³

THE Scriptural warrant leads us to indulge high expectations from the labours of the Christian Ministry. And yet, in every sphere of labour, these bright prospects are more or less overcast; as if a sanguine temperament had unduly heightened our anticipations. Much cultivation is sometimes bestowed upon the soil with little proportionate success. The same means and instruments, that had been formerly productive

¹ Exodus xvii. 7.

² Isaiah lxiv. 1. Hab. iii. 2.

³ For some striking views on this subject—see Dr. Chalmers's Sermon on the necessity of the Spirit to give effect to the Preaching of the Gospel.

of important benefits, fail in their accustomed effect. Now who would cultivate his lands at considerable and disappointed cost, without inquiring into the causes of the failure of his just expectations? And must not we ask—What is wanting to give effect to that order of means, the power of which has been often exhibited, and which we know to be constituted in the Divine purpose for the renovation of the world? Mr. Cecil has remarked—‘There is a manifest want of spiritual influence in the Ministry of the present day. I feel it in my own case, and I see it in that of others.’¹ This remark sufficiently explains the symptoms of that barrenness which prevails among us. For not more needful are the influences of heaven to fertilize the soil and promote vegetation, than is this Divine influence to give quickening power to the word. In vain therefore do we plough and sow, if the Lord “command the clouds, that they rain no rain”² upon the field of the spiritual husbandry.

Let us advert to *Scriptural testimony*. The want of effect produced by the first promulgation of the Divine will, (confirmed as it was by signs and wonders) together with the unbelief of Israel in the prophetic report and even in the Ministry of the Son of God—are traced to this source.³ Our Lord insists upon the necessity of Divine influence in order to come to him,⁴ —and to abide in him.⁵ The want of this influence rendered his public Ministry comparatively inefficient. Though his doctrine was Divine—though his character was perfect—and though daily miracles attested his mission, yet little appears to have been done; while Peter, a poor fisherman, endued with this Almighty

¹ Cecil's Remains.

² Isa. v. 6.

³ See Deut. xxix. 4, 5. Isa. liii. 1. John xii. 39, 40.

⁴ See John vi. 44, 65.

⁵ Ibid. xv. 1—5.

power, becomes the instrument of converting more under a single sermon, than probably his Master had done throughout his whole Ministry.¹ The other Apostles preached, both in collective and in individual instances, with the same “demonstration of the Spirit and power.” At Antioch, “*the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.*”² Lydia “attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul,” because “*the Lord opened her heart.*”³ Thus does the uniform tenor of the sacred records mark the power of the Spirit, as the seal and confirmation of the Word, and as the life-giving influence, diffused throughout the church, from the time that the first lively stone was laid upon the foundation of God. And therefore the withholding of this blessing must necessarily be attended with proportionate painful symptoms of Ministerial inefficiency.

The *reason of the thing* confirms this view of the subject. Admitting the Scriptural statements of man’s natural condition—“dead in trespasses and sins”—“having his understanding darkened”—his mind the very principle of enmity to the truth under the most attractive form—and his stony heart in-

¹ Acts ii. See this accounted for John vii. 39; and indeed promised John xiv. 12. “I once said to myself in the foolishness of my heart, ‘What sort of a sermon must that have been, which was preached by St. Peter, when three thousand souls were converted at once?’ What sort of sermon! Such as other sermons. There is nothing to be found in it extraordinary. The effect was not produced by his eloquence, but by the mighty power of God present with his Word. It is in vain to attend one Minister after another, and to have sermon after sermon, unless we pray that the Holy Spirit may accompany his Word.”—Cecil’s Remains. Who will not join with a pious old writer in ardent longing for another Pentecost? ‘O si hisce pessimis et ultimis temporibus consimili rore vespertino (ut illi matutino) sicca Ecclesiæ Christi pomeria irrigarentur ac fœcundarentur!’ T. Hall’s Sal Terræ.

² Acts xi. 21.

³ Ibid. xvi. 14.

sensible to its blessings¹—how palpable is the need of Divine influence! ‘Can a well-composed oration,’ (as Charnock asks) ‘setting out all the advantages of life and health, raise a dead man, or cure a diseased body? You may as well exhort a blind man to behold the sun, and prevail as much. No man ever yet imagined, that the strewing a dead body with flowers would raise it to life; no more can the urging a man spiritually dead with eloquent motives ever make him to open his eyes, and to stand upon his feet. “The working of mighty power” is a title too high for the capacity of mere moral exhortations. A mere suasion does not confer a strength, but supposes it in a man; for he is only persuaded to use the power which he hath already.’² The clearest instructions may furnish the understanding, but they have no power to sway the will, except to what is suitable and connatural to its native suggestions and habits. Whenever the gospel successfully influences the heart, it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”³

And does not *observation and experience* add further confirmation to this subject? Do we not know accomplished and devoted Ministers, who are less honoured in their work than others of their brethren of far inferior qualifications? And do we not find differences of effect under the same Ministry, and even under the same sermons, which can only be explained by the sovereign dispensation of Divine influence? Has not personal experience shewn us, that the same motives operate in the same service with very differ-

¹ Compare Eph. ii. 1; iv. 18. Acts xxvi. 18. Rom. viii. 7. John iii. 19, 20, &c.

² Charnock on Regeneration, Works, vol. ii. 200.

³ Zechariah iv. 6.

ent measures of influence? And do we not realize the same difference in our Ministerial experience—in our pastoral as well as in our pulpit work—that sometimes a single sentence is clothed with Almighty power—at other times it is only the feeble breath of a worm? ‘Have you never’ (Charnock again asks in his usual terseness) ‘discoursed with some profane loose fellow so pressingly, that he seemed to be shaken out of his excuses for his sinful course, yet not shaken out of his sin: that you might as soon have persuaded the tide at full sea to retreat, or a lion to change his nature, as have overcome him by all your arguments? So that it is not the faint breath of man, or the rational consideration of the mind, are able to do this work, without the mighty pleadings and powerful operations of that great Paraclete or Advocate, the Spirit, to alter the temper of the soul.’¹ This then is the main source of Ministerial success. “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high,”² the wilderness, notwithstanding the most diligent cultivation, must remain a wilderness still.

¹ Charnock on Regeneration, vol. ii. 201. ‘Alas!’ (exclaims Mr. Howe) ‘what would preaching do, if we could suppose it never so general, while the Spirit of the living God restrains and withholds his influences! We may as well attempt to batter strong walls with the breath of our mouths, as to do good upon men’s souls without the Spirit of God.’ Sermon xiv. on the Work of the Spirit in the Church. Works v. 356. ‘Spiritus sanctus operetur oportet intrinsecus, ut valeat aliquid medicina, quæ adhibetur extrinsecus; nisi hic cordi adsit audientis, otiosus est sermo loquentis.’ Augustine.

² Isaiah xxxii. 15. ‘In preaching,’—said Mr. Cecil—‘I have no encouragement, but the belief of a continued Divine operation. To bring a man to love God—to love the law of God, while it condemns him—to loathe himself before God—to tread the earth under his feet—to hunger and thirst after God in Christ—*with man this is impossible.* But God has said—*It shall be done—and bids me go forth and preach, that by me, as his instrument, he may effect these great ends; and therefore I go.*’ Remains.

If it be asked—Why is this promised blessing¹ withheld—we might reply in our Lord's own words—“ Even so ; Father ; for so it seemeth good in thy sight.”² But let the dispensation be considered rather as matter for self-inquiry, than as an arbitrary appointment. Has then this influence been sought for and cherished with earnest fervency of prayer ? Have spiritual “ gifts within us been stirred up ” by the activity of faith ? Let us remember, that our encouragement to prayer remains the same. God is indeed absolutely sovereign in the distribution of his blessing ; but, by his command to seek, he has pledged himself, that we shall not seek in vain. Having freely promised, he will faithfully perform. Let all means be used in diligence, but in dependence—in self-denial, but in self-renunciation. Let not Ministers be unduly exalted among their people. We are only instruments “ *by whom* they believe ; ”³ and a dependence on our labour may provoke the grand Agent—who “ giveth not his glory to another ”—to wither the most effective Ministry, that these idolaters may “ know that we are but men.” We may be reduced to ask—“ Where is the Lord God of Elijah ? ”⁴—who can accomplish more by one feeble sentence from the feeblest instrument, than we can do without him by the most powerful preaching.

¹ Compare Isa. xlv. 3—5. Joel ii. 28.

² Matt. xi. 26.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.

⁴ 2 Kings ii. 14.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENMITY OF THE NATURAL HEART A MAIN
CAUSE OF THE WANT OF MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.

THE office of the Christian Ministry might seem to command a successful issue of the work. It is "the Ministry of reconciliation;" where the offended party stoops to make the first overtures of peace, and sends his ambassadors to "beseech by them," and "pray" the rebels "in his stead—Be ye reconciled to God."¹ Such a display of disinterested condescension, infinite humility, and compassionate tenderness, might have been expected to give resistless efficacy to the message. The rich fruits of everlasting love are brought to the door of those, who are most deeply interested in it, and whose need of the blessing is inexpressibly great. Such a promulgation of mercy, given to men in guileless ignorance and urgent need, would meet with a ready and universal welcome. But here it meets with a resisting medium. The avenues of approach are barred against its entrance, and the success is limited within comparatively narrow bounds.

By the terms of the commission, it is "preached to every creature;"² but the disproportionate effect reminds us of the solemn and sententious declaration—"Many be called, but few chosen."³ If indeed we were "as many, which corrupt the word of God"—if we would consent to lower its requisitions to a worldly standard, or to a corrupt heart, it would be received with cordial regard, and we should "have

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18—20.² Mark xvi. 15.³ Matt. xx. 16.

our reward" (purchased indeed at an infinite cost¹) in the praise of men. But if "as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ;"² "renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"³—we must not wonder to hear it repeated—"I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."⁴ The whole course of the Ministry is a struggle against the mighty current of sin—originating in that restless bias of the natural heart, which upon the highest authority is declared to be "enmity against God."⁵

Nor let this hinderance to the reception of the Gospel be placed to the Minister's account. Ignorance, indiscretion, eccentricity, inconsistency, or want of conduct in his course, will indeed be *an occasion* of calling it forth. Want of conciliation and address will tend to increase it. A defective exhibition of the spirit of the cross aggravates the offence of the cross. But it must be remembered, that the Ministration of the Gospel from an angel's mouth would stir up the natural principle of degenerate man. What could be conceived more attractive than the combination of dignity, humility, patience, and love that marked the Ministry of the Son of God? Yet were his Ministrations universally despised and rejected. His doctrine was most offensive to the natural prejudices of the unhumbled heart. His general statements were listened to with the interest of curiosity, and the desire of "hearing some new thing;" but their personal application to the consciences of his

¹ See Gal. i. 7—10.

² 2 Cor. ii. 17.

³ Ibid. iv. 2.

⁴ 1 Kings xxii. 8.

⁵ Rom. viii. 7.

hearers—the certain reproach of his cross—the relinquishment of all that was held dear for his service—the prostrate submission required for the reception of his truth—all combined to produce the “murmuring among themselves”—the complaint of the intolerable “hardness of his sayings,” and the resolution to abandon their temporary profession.¹

The innate opposition, existing between the substance and the objects of the Ministry, offers therefore a material impediment to the success of this Divine institution. It addresses itself to those, whose attention is already pre-occupied, whose affections have been long pre-engaged, and whose “hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” The truth therefore never comes into contact with a sincere and honest heart. Enmity is the concentrated essence of man’s depravity. It is at once the cause and the effect of that moral or spiritual darkness, which shuts out the entrance of light, and offers difficulties to the process of “enlightening the eyes of the understanding,” unconquerable by any force short of Divine influence. The power that “slays the enmity,” opens the heart to the perception, obedience, and love of the truth, and to a full possession of the inestimable blessings of the Christian Ministry.

¹ John vi. 24—66.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POWER OF SATAN A MAIN HINDERANCE TO
MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.

THE active power and unsearchable subtlety of Satan are always directed against the Christian Ministry, as the engine "mighty through God to the pulling down of his strong holds."¹ This is his grand point of attack upon the Redeemer's kingdom. We could scarcely expect, that "the devouring lion"² would quietly submit to have his prey wrested from his teeth, or that "the strong man armed"³ would resign his spoils without a severe conflict.

The nature and extent of his unceasing opposition are less difficult to conceive than accurately to define. It meets us however in every sphere. *In the world* his influence is palpable, in a general listless inattention to the word of God, and an immediate transition from thence into the very vortex of the world⁴—in the awful blindness of men to the glory of the Saviour,⁵ in their thoughtless unconcern for eternity,⁶ and in his captivating dominion over such vast multitudes,⁷ unable to "deliver their souls," or to say—"Is there not a lie in my right hand?"⁸ 'The course of this world' (or what is elsewhere called "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"⁹) is distinctly identified with the power of "the spirit, which now worketh in the children of disobedience."¹⁰ The same enemy stirs up the natural enmity of the

¹ 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.⁴ Matt. xiii. 19.⁷ 2 Tim. ii. 26.² 1 Peter v. 8.⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 4.⁸ Isa. xliv. 20.¹⁰ Ephes. ii. 2.³ Luke xi. 21, 22.⁶ Luke xi. 21.⁹ 1 John ii. 16.

heart to the followers of Christ, and employs with incessant malignity tongues, pens, and influence against the cause of God¹—thus illustrating and sustaining his Scriptural characters—as the “Prince and the God of this world”—“the father of lies,”—“that old serpent, which deceiveth the whole world.”²

In the professing church—this restless enemy works his artful leaven with “all deceivableness of unrighteousness;” covering his spiritual wiles with some new and pleasing doctrines, adapted to the taste of the times; and thus poisoning the bread of life by the adulteration of man’s devices. His subtlety is peculiarly marked in the accommodation of the forms of deception to the different temperaments of his victims. Carnal security suits with the world, and succeeds to the utmost of his desires in keeping “his goods in peace.” But such schemes would be ineffectual with a nominal recognition of serious religion. For the church therefore he exhibits the attractive idol of self-righteousness; or, that most inveterate form of antichrist, the dependence on the profession of a pure doctrine—thus “transforming himself into an angel of light.”³

The Apostle intimates, that the general symptoms of Ministerial ineffectiveness may be traced to this source.⁴ And indeed we are at no loss to discover his active influence in every point of detail. The explanation of the growth of the tares among the wheat is—“An enemy hath done this.”⁵ The serpent, that beguiled Eve through his subtlety” still “corrupts” the minds of the weak “from the sim-

¹ Compare Gen. iii. 15. Rev. xii. 17.

² John xii. 31. 2 Cor. iv. 4. John viii. 44. Rev. xii. 9.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

⁴ 1 Thess. iii. 5.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 24—28.

plicity that is in Christ.”¹ The Ministerial hinderances from divisions and want of love among Christian professors,² and the successful opposition sometimes made to schemes of Ministerial usefulness—are traced to the secret operation of the same active cause.³ The hypocrisy of professors within the church⁴—or their apostacy from her communion;⁵ all the successive vicissitudes of her history; all the drawbacks to the full energies of the Christian Ministry—flow from this “fountain” of evil, continually “sending forth bitter waters.”

Individual experience discloses the constant exercise of the same principle. To this source the Christian traces his subtle workings of unbelief⁶—his wanderings of heart in prayer⁷—his occasional indulgence of self-confidence,⁸ spiritual pride,⁹ and worldliness¹⁰—the injection of blasphemous thoughts¹¹—the power of evil tempers¹²—and the general commission of sin¹³—all which, according to their prevalency, are positive hinderances to the holy and blessed influence of the Christian Ministration. The appalling conflict between the powers of darkness and light is therefore exhibited before us—“the god of this world blinding the eyes of them that believe not”—while the Ministry of the gospel exhibits “Christ Jesus the Lord” as the medium, by which “God, who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the hearts” of his people with the revelation of his “glory.”¹⁴ Thus, while the active agency of the Evil Spirit,

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 3.² Ibid. ii. 10.³ 1 Thess. ii. 18.⁴ Acts v. 1—5.⁵ Luke xxii. 3. Rev. xii. 3, 4.⁶ Gen. iii. 1—3.⁷ Job i. 6.⁸ 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Luke xxii. 31.⁹ 2 Cor. xii. 7.¹⁰ Matt. xxi. 23.¹¹ Eph. vi. 16.¹² Ibid. iv. 27.¹³ 1 John iii. 8.¹⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

by his direct and instrumental operation,¹ is counter-acting the progress of our Ministry, we may be said indeed to “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”²

CHAPTER V.

LOCAL HINDERANCES TO MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.

WE have already incidentally glanced at some of the main drawbacks upon the Christian Ministry; and others in a more minute detail will hereafter come under consideration. Our present business is with those impediments, that depend not so much upon the personal or official character of the Minister, as upon extrinsic causes, connected with the circumstances of his individual sphere. Thus a town presents many hinderances, which in the same degree do not belong to the superintendence of a country parish. The moral impossibility of penetrating the dense mass of the population, and of insulating the several component parts, originates a want of close dealing with individual consciences in the personal application of the word, which is so powerfully effective for the great purposes of the Pulpit Ministry. The course also of public instruction is necessarily of a more general complexion. The exercises of the Minister's experience may indeed give an individual mould to its character; but the want of particular acquaint-

¹ Homines instrumentaliter, mundus materialiter, Satanas efficienter. Sclater on 1 Thess. iii. 5.

² Eph. vi. 12.

ance with his people must preclude in its measure the adaptation of his Ministry to the specialities of their respective cases. *Local habits* also tend materially to counteract the direct power of the Ministry. Large congregated bodies, (as in manufacturing districts) are usually most corrupting pests—"hand joining in hand"—and "every man helping his neighbour" in the way of sin, and saying to his brother—"Be of good courage."¹ There are also *local hinderances*, connected *with the constitution of the Ministry*. A co-partnership in the sacred work often excites most painfully the Corinthian heresy of a party spirit among the people. Mutual jealousies are fomented (which it is well if they do not reach the bosom of the labourers themselves)—men "are puffed up for one against another"—they learn to "glory in men"—and with the highest advantages of a spiritual administration, their Ministers are constrained still to speak unto them" not as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ, "walking as men."² The *rise and progress of various heresies* may also be strengthened by local combinations not immediately under Ministerial controul. The want of insight into the several departments of the flock in an extensive sphere, gives occasion for the watchful enemy to cast in his leaven, which, with a deadly influence, threatens to "leaven the whole lump." The Ministrations of some of the most eminent servants of God³ have suffered severely from this source; though it was probably as needful a trial of faith, patience, and humility in the midst of their successful energy, as was "the thorn in the flesh" to the great

¹ Isaiah xli. 6.

² See 1 Cor. i. iii. iv.

³ Cecil's Life of Cadogan. (Works i. 252.) Vaughan's Life of Robinson, pp. 188—195.

Apostle, to save him from the impending danger of being "exalted above measure."¹

Other hinderances also of this local character belong more immediately to the Ministry of the Establishment, and often act unfavourably even upon faithful and laborious exertions. The ground may have been pre-occupied by one or more of the organized systems of dissent, recognizing the grand principles of the Gospel, but under a form in many particulars opposed to the frame-work of our own system. This, under the most favourable circumstances, must be regarded as an evil;² inasmuch as the want of Christian unity diminishes proportionably from the native power of the Gospel. Even if the respective Ministers are men of forbearance and brotherly love, and in the true spirit of their commission lay far more stress upon their points of agreement than upon their points of difference—it is not likely, that the same spirit should universally spread through their congregations; and the defect of this mutual forbearance, often called forth by comparative trifles, reminds us in its baneful consequences—"how great a matter a little fire kindleth."³

The faithful labourer may also find *many hinderances rooted in the soil*, before it passed under his hands for cultivation. The rank and luxuriant weed of profession may have choked the growth of much, that might otherwise have sprung up with prospect of "fruit unto perfection." He may suffer also from the effects of prejudice superadded to the natural enmity to the Gospel, arising from the inexperience, imprudence, or inconsistency of his predecessor.

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

² See some valuable remarks on this subject by Mr. Budd, in his work on Baptism, pp. 282, 283. Compare also Bickersteth's Christian Student, p. 290.

³ James iii. 5.

Lay influence also, connected with the higher classes of society, often hangs a weight upon the simplicity and power of his work. The contempt of the Sabbath—the predominant character of pleasure, dissipation, and the general inattention or hostility to religion in the heads of the parish—oppose a hostile front to the course of the Christian Ministry. And, where the influence is of a less decided character, or even where it is exercised on the side of the Church—yet it is rarely unattended with material drawbacks. The respect for religion and for the ordinances of God does not always regulate the arrangements of the house, the general style of appearance, or the deportment of the lower members of the household. It may also be not wholly divested of a love of power; a reluctance to be controuled by spiritual restraints; or to depart from the indulgent course of neutrality, when a more full sway of influence on the side of the Gospel might incur inconvenience or reproach.

Now these hinderances are irrespective of personal responsibility in their origin, but most detrimental in their consequences. It would be obviously impossible to prescribe any specific course of procedure, applicable to every form of resistance. The general principles of the Ministry, well directed against the several points of attack, will be however of immense service in this warfare. The combined influence of the diligence of faith, “the meekness of wisdom,” and “the patience of hope”—if they do not wholly counteract the evil—will materially retard its aggressive operation. Nor are the difficulties attached to extensive spheres insurmountable. Much may be done—much has been done—by bending general systems to more minute applications. Methodized habits have been more effective under the greatest disadvantages, than an

undisciplined course of Ministry, assisted by much local superiority. District systems of visiting have enabled laborious ministers to pass over a wide extent of ground with far more particularity and fruitfulness. And above all, the wise superintendence of the Great Head of the Church has been signally displayed in a suitable adaptation of his chosen instruments for their specific work. Men are not all alike qualified for all situations. But "he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand,"¹ appoints unto each its place in the firmament of his Church—as shall be most suited for the honour of his name, for the purpose of his will, and for the edification of his Church. The hinderances, however, to which we have alluded, must impede the progress of the Christian Ministry; so that its success will often consist, not so much in any *prominent* outward change in its sphere, as in the silent and effectual opposition to the current of evil, in the raising up of a band of witnesses to cooperate with the Minister in his labour, and in the steady perseverance, with which the ground is maintained in the midst of conflict and discouragement.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WANT OF A DIVINE CALL A MAIN CAUSE OF FAILURE IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE want of Ministerial success may sometimes be traced to the very threshold of the entrance into the work. Was the call to the sacred office clear in the order of the church, and according to the will of God?

¹ Rev. ii. 1.

This question bears with vast importance upon the subject. Where the call is manifest, the promise is assured—"Certainly I will be with thee."¹ But if we run unsent, our labours must prove unblest. Many, we fear, have never exercised their minds upon this inquiry. But do not we see the standing ordinance of the church written upon their unproductive Ministrations—"I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord?"² The curse of barrenness was not, that their doctrine was unsound, but that they preached unsent.

Under the old dispensation it was marked as the most dangerous presumption to intrude upon the priestly office.³ Nor is it a less direct act of usurpation to take authority in the Church of Christ without a Divine commission. Our great Head himself appeared with *delegated, not with self-commissioned authority*. He had declared his call prophetically⁴ upon his prospective undertaking of his work. It was manifested to the world, as the preparatory step to his public Ministry, as well as in the course of his work.⁵ Often did he appeal to it as the credentials of his commission.⁶ Those who "entered into the fold," without his authority, he stamps as "thieves

¹ Exodus iii. 12.

² Jer. xxiii. 32. Luther's language is very strong—'Expecta vocantem; interim esto securus; imo si esses sapientior ipso Salomone et Daniele; tamen, nisi voceris, plus quam infernum fuge, ne verbum effundas. Si tui egerit, vocabit te. Si non vocabit, non te rumpat scientia tua.—Nunquam enim Deus fortunat laborem eorum, qui non sunt vocati; et quanquam quædam salutaria afferant, tamen nihil ædificant. E regione, magna semper fecerunt, qui Deo, vocante docuerunt.' Quoted in *Sal Terræ*, ut supra.

³ See Num. xviii. 7. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—20.

⁴ Isa. xlvi. 16. lxi. 1.

⁵ Matt. iii. 16, 17, also xvii. 5. John xii. 28—30.

⁶ John vii. 16; viii. 42.

and robbers;” and he only, who “entered in by” his Divine commission at “the door into the fold, was the Shepherd of the sheep.”¹

Indeed the different illustrations of the office necessarily suppose a regular call. We cannot conceive of a herald—an ambassador—a steward—a watchman—a messenger—an angel—with self-constituted authority. The Apostle asks, with regard to the first of these—“How shall they preach, except they be sent?” They may indeed preach without a mission, but not as the messengers of God. No one can be an ambassador, except he be charged *expressly* with instructions from his Sovereign (else would he deliver the fruit of his own brain, not his Sovereign’s will and commands); nor can any one legitimately come in the name of God to confirm the revelations of his will, except by his own express appointment.²

The divine call is either external or internal. As external, it is a commission received from and recognized by the church, according to the Scriptural and primitive order: not indeed qualifying the Minister, but authorizing him, whom God had internally and suitably qualified. The external call communicates only official authority. The internal call conveys personal qualifications. Both however—though essen-

¹ John x. 1, 2. ‘The Ministry is a matter of pure grace and favour; who then will dare to enter into it without a Divine call? There is nothing, in which a king would willingly be more absolute than in the choice of his Ministers. And shall we dare to contest and take away this right from the King of kings? Quesnel on Ephes. iii. 2. Col. i. 1.

² Hooker admirably observes—‘They are therefore Ministers of God, not only by way of subordination as princes and civil magistrates (whose execution of judgment and justice the supreme hand of Divine Providence doth uphold,) but Ministers of God, as from whom their authority is derived, and not from men. For in that they are Christ’s ambassadors and his labourers, who should give them their commission, but He whose most inward affairs they manage?’

tially distinct in their character and source—are indispensable for the exercise of the Divine commission. Both of them therefore unite in His government, who “is not the Author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints;”¹ and whose unction, of a rational, holy, and orderly character, harmoniously combines with the constituted appointment of his will. How plainly do the superscriptions of St. Paul’s Epistles, (with one or two exceptions,) stamp his instructions to the churches with the seal of his Divine commission! As Quesnel observes—‘He is never weary of inculcating to us this truth—that the will of God is the sole rule of any man’s call, and the only gate, by which he can enter into the Ministry. The Mission is Divine in its fountain and institution—human in its channel and way of communication.’²

The *external call*, though necessary and authoritative in its character—yet,—as being the mere delegation of man, is not of itself a sufficient warrant for our work. *The inward call*—the work of Divine influence—is the presumptive ground, on which our church delegates her authorized commission. Nothing can be more explicit than the solemn question, which she has put to us—‘Do you trust, that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?’ ‘Certainly, (as Bishop Burnet remarks with his usual seriousness) ‘the answer that is made to this ought to be well considered; for if any says—‘*I trust so*’—that yet knows nothing of any such motion, and can give no account of it, he lies to the

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

² Quesnel on 2 Cor. i. 1. Gal. i. 1. ‘In times past,’ observes Luther, ‘when I was but a young Divine, methought Paul did unwisely in glorying so oft of his calling in all his Epistles; but I did not understand his purpose: For I knew not that the Ministry of God’s word was so weighty a matter.’ On Gal. i. 1.

Holy Ghost, and makes his first approach to the altar with a lie in his mouth, and that not to men, but to God.’² Now if there be any meaning in terms as illustrative of things, an inward movement by the Holy Ghost must imply his influence upon the heart—not indeed manifested by any enthusiastic impulse—but enlightening the heart under a deep impression of the worth of souls—constraining the soul by the love of Christ to “spend and be spent for him”—and directing the conscience to a sober, searching, self-inquiry; to a daily study in the word; to prayer in distinct reference to this important subject; and to a careful and considerate observation of Providential circumstances, as the clear indications of the Divine will.

However, ‘that which no man ought to do, almost every man does, in making himself the sovereign judge of his own calling.’¹ The influence of a wrong bias upon the mind, is a fruitful source of mistake. Constitutional bias, or worldly considerations, often perplex the path, and darken the tokens of the Divine guidance. May a man presume, that he is thus “inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost,” because his inclination leads him to the Ministry—or he has been educated for it—or he is thrust into it by the wishes of friends, or even by parental counsel or authority? It would indeed open a wide door for enthusiasm, to suppose, that a bias of the mind was a sufficient warrant for this most solemn undertaking. Motives and feelings, individual character and capacities, are so often viewed through the medium of self-love and self-complacency, that in this, as in various other matters of moment, we are reminded of the Divine aphorism—“He that trusteth

¹ Pastoral Care, chap. vi.

² Quesnel on Heb. v. 4.

to his own heart is a fool.”¹ What would survive the fervour of the bias, besides the melancholy exhibition of an unfurnished mind; or such a low standard of Ministerial duty, as would bring the office into utter contempt? Nor must we admit the interference of parental influence in the choice of a work, that wholly depends upon what Burnet calls ‘a Divine vocation.’ ‘The national Church’ (as has been truly and feelingly stated by one, who had a deep personal interest in the subject) ‘groans and bleeds from the crown of its head to the sole of its feet from the daily intrusion of unworthy men into the ministry’ from this source.² ‘The will of man’ must subserve—not resist, on a point so deeply connected with the interests of the church, and where the will of God should make the sole and ultimate decision. ‘Happy that person, who can say with the Apostle, that it is “through the will of God,” and not *through his own, or that of his parents*, that he is in the sacred Ministry.’³

Nor should personal and consistent piety (irrespective of other considerations) form our determination. ‘No man,’ indeed, (as Bishop Burnet remarks,) ‘ought to think of this profession, unless he feels within himself a love to religion, with a zeal for it, and an internal true piety, which is chiefly kept up by secret prayer and reading the Scriptures. As long as these things are a man’s burden, they are infallible indices, that he has no inward vocation, nor motion of the Holy Spirit

¹ Prov. xxviii. 26.

² Life of Legh Richmond, p. 475. The whole letter is worthy the deep consideration of Christian parents, in the ultimate designation of their children for the Christian Ministry. The pious Quesnel puts up a prayer in reference to this deadly evil—‘Lord, vouchsafe to put a stop to the torrent of this carnal love in parents. *Thou seest, how thy church is almost overwhelmed with it.*’ On John vii. 5.

³ Quesnel on 1 Cor. i. 1.

possess nothing, but for Jesus Christ and his Church.'¹ The importance and purity of this desire are strongly marked, as the grand qualifications to "feed the flock

¹ Quesnel on Rom. i. 1. and John x. 1, 2. Calvin gives the same view—'Est autem bonum cordis nostri testimonium, *quod neque ambitione, neque avaritia, neque ulla alia cupiditate, sed sincero Dei timore, et ædificandæ Ecclesiæ studio oblatum munus recipiamus.* Id quidem unicuique nostrum (ut dixi), si volumus Ministerium nostrum Deo approbare, necessarium est.' Instit. Lib. iv. c. iii. 11. Comber supposes, that our Reformers had this definition in their view in framing the important question in the Ordination Service, which was written a few years after the publication of the Institutes. Philip Henry gave a most beautiful exposition of this desire, in answer to the question put to him at his Ordination—'As far as upon search and inquiry I can hitherto find, though there be that within me, that would seek great things for myself (if indeed they were to be found in this calling), yet with my mind I seek them not. But the improvement of the talent, which I have received in the service of the Gospel, for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, I hope is in my eyes. If there be anything else, I own it not—I allow it not. While so many "seek their own," it is my desire, and it shall be my endeavour, to "seek the things of Jesus Christ."' Life, p. 34.—Matthew Henry's self-inquiry at the same sacred season was of a similar spirit. 'I. *What am I?*' Have I been convinced of my condition, and been humbled for my sin? Have I heartily given myself to Christ? Have I a real hatred of sin, and love of holiness? II. *What have I done?* Time trifled! opportunities lost! engagements broken! conversation unprofitable! forgetfulness of God and of duty! III. *From what principles do I undertake this work?* I trust from a persuasion of the Divine Institution of the Ministry, of the necessity of a Divine call, and of my call to the work: from zeal to God, and love to precious souls. IV. *What are my ends in this work?* Not taking it as a trade to live by; not to get myself a name, or to maintain a party; but aiming at the glory of God, and the good of souls. V. *What do I want?* That God would fix my heart in dedication to the work; that he would be with me at my Ordination; that he would fit me for my work with the gifts of knowledge, utterance, and prudence; and with all Ministerial graces, especially sincerity and humility; and that he would open a door of opportunity to me. VI. *What are my resolutions?* To have nothing to do with sin; to abound in gospel obedience; to consider my Ordination Vow in the employment of my talents, the maintenance of the truth, the charge of my family, the superintendance of my flock, and the endurance of opposition.' Abridged from Henry's Life, p. 34—44.

of God.”¹ “If I do this thing willingly” (says the Apostle) “I have a reward.”²—“But if you do not feel in yourselves’ (as the eloquent Massillon addresses his clergy) ‘*a desire of being employed as the ambassadors of God—judge ye yourselves, whether ye are called into the Lord’s vineyard.* God implants a love in the heart for the service to which he calls; and better would it have been for you to have felt, that it was not the Ministry for which you were intended, than that you should possess a want of inclination for the performance of its duties. *It is not necessary, that a voice from heaven should say to you in secret—“The Lord hath not sent you.”—Your judgment, enforced by the dictates of your conscience, tells you so.*”³

II. But to this desire must be added a *competent measure of Ministerial gifts.* Our Lord was furnished with this evidence of his call, and endowment for his work.⁴ The Apostle distinctly connects this ability with the Ministerial commission, which he directs to be consigned not to “faithful men” generally—but to those among them, “*which shall be able to teach others also.*”⁵ But as this subject has already come under consideration,⁶ we shall only observe—that in the habit of prayer, simplicity, and faith—combined with a conscientious improvement of natural capacity, and a diligent increase of intellectual and spiritual

¹ See 1 Peter. v. 2.

² 1 Cor. ix. 17.

³ Massillon’s Charges, p. 60.

⁴ Compare Psalm xlv. 7. Isaiah xi. 2—4; xlii. 1; lxi. 1. His own messenger exhibited these credentials, when proclaiming him to the people—John iii. 34.

⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 2. Elsewhere he marks this qualification by a word, which our translators have given with sufficient accuracy—“apt to teach”—*διδακτικος*—1 Tim. iii. 1. 2 Tim. ii. 24. Compare 2 Cor. iii. 6.

⁶ Part I. chap. vi. On Ministerial qualifications.

store—encouragement to seek admission into the office may be cherished.

But so important is the combination of the desire and capacity for the office, that neither, separate from the other, can be deemed sufficient. The desire for the work, (though correctly answering to the standard of intensity, consideration, and purity) does not of itself attest a Divine vocation. We cannot suppose the Lord to send unqualified labourers, *however willing*, into his vineyard:¹ and none but he can qualify them. Yet may the Christian, even in the disappointment of his most ardent wishes, console himself with the most gracious acceptance of his desires,² though his services be not required. Nor will the richest furniture of Ministerial gifts, without a special desire and interest in the work, (though it may qualify the Christian for important usefulness as a helper of the Church) evidence a movement by the Holy Ghost for this high and important service. The combined desire and ability evidence the inward call, which is legitimately authorized by the representatives of the Church, and will doubtless be yet more clearly attested by the beneficial influence of the Ministry upon the flock.³

¹ In the common affairs of life it has been remarked; that "he that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage"—Prov. xxvi. 6. Could we then suppose, that Divine wisdom would commit the administration of the Church to capacities inadequate to the responsibility of that most important trust? ² 1 Kings viii. 18.

³ This view of the subject is nearly identical with Bishop Burnet. It may be sufficient to refer to his statement; but his application is too striking to be omitted. '*This man*' (remarks the Bishop with a solemnity truly episcopal) '*and this man only—so moved and qualified, can in truth and with a good conscience answer, that he trusts he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost. And every man that ventures on the saying it without this, is a sacrilegious profaner of the name of God, and of his Holy Spirit. He breaks in upon his church, not to feed it but to rob it; and it*

A confirmation however of this call may be *looked for in providential circumstances*. The kingdom of providence is 'the wheel within a wheel,' moving in harmonious conjunction but in direct subserviency to the purposes of God respecting his Church. It is reasonable therefore to suppose, that in his inward call to his own work, he would providentially dispose the circumstances, thoughts, inclinations, and studies of the individual to this main end. If the arrangements of his providence decide the choice of a secular calling, much more clearly may we expect him thus to mark the path on a matter so intimately connected with the interests of his Church. Various circumstances will subordinately tend to reflect light upon the track. The disappointment of plans for a future course in life—the unexpected and repeated closing up of worldly avenues—unlooked for openings in the Church (in the *way of usefulness, not of preferment*)—some particular crisis in the individual sphere—some control or direction of family circumstances may prove the "word behind us, saying—This is the way, walk ye in it."¹ The direction, however, will probably be given rather in the way of restraint than of indulgence of a constitutional propensity. A sanguine temperament will often be damped, and an indolent habit shaken, by untoward tokens of Providence. Wise and tender discipline will form the pliable spirit, ready to discern and follow the track of the Divine guidance. The Lord usually trains his servants to waiting, and to many conflicting exercises in their way to his immediate service. But in the

is certain, that he who begins with a lie may be sent by the father of lies; but *he cannot be thought to "enter in by the door," who prevaricates in the first word that he says in order to his admittance.*
—Pastoral Care, ch. vi.

¹ Isaiah xxx. 21.

spirit of humility, faith, and patience, their "path will be as the shining light."

The *judgment of experienced Ministers* might prove of essential service in assuring the mind of the sound basis of the Ministerial call; lest the desire for the work should prove rather the impulse of feeling than of principle, and lest the capacity should be the confidence of self-delusion. The late pious and learned Dr. Leland took this satisfactory view of his own case — 'God has been graciously pleased' (said he,) 'to give me some talents, which seem capable of being improved to the edification of the church. He hath disposed and inclined my heart to a willingness to take upon me the sacred Ministry, and that not from worldly, carnal ends and views, but from a sincere intention and desire of employing the talents he has given me in promoting the salvation of souls, and serving the interests of truth, piety, and righteousness in the world. And I have been encouraged by the judgment and approbation of several learned and pious Ministers, who, after a diligent course of trials, carried on for a considerable time, judged me to be properly qualified for that sacred office, and animated me to undertake it. Upon seriously weighing all these things, I cannot but think, I have a clear call to the work of the Ministry; and I verily believe, that, if I rejected it, I should sin against God, grieve many of his people, counteract the designs of Divine Providence towards me, and alienate the talents he has given me to other purposes than those for which they seem to have been intended.'¹

The importance of this discussion will be generally allowed. It is a source of the deepest discouragement

¹ See Leland's Life, prefixed to his Sermons.

to the Minister, to labour in the dark, without a satisfactory view of an accredited commission. His warrant of faith in the Divine engagements is obscured; and his consequent inability to avail himself of heavenly support, makes his "hands hang down, and his knees feeble" in his work. On the other hand, the assurance that he is acting in obedience to the call of God—that he is in his work—and in his way—nerves him in the midst of difficulty and reproach with a lively interest in the promises of direction and encouragement, and stimulates him under a constraining sense of his most responsible obligation. Yet under no circumstances is there a warranted ground for distress in a simple consecration to the service of God. Let the Minister in seasons of perplexity and contemplation cast himself upon the mercy of God, and doubt not of acceptance.

But in closing our consideration of this subject, we cannot forget, that the inward call has not always accompanied the public investment with Ministerial authority. With many of us it is a painful recollection, that we entered into this sacred office with hearts unenlightened with Christian doctrine, and unimpressed with Ministerial obligations.¹ Yet let the remembrance of this sin be in humiliation—not in despondency. Let us be afflicted indeed for our unhallowed approach to the sacred altar—yet not "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." There is with our gracious God mercy for this, as well as for any other sin; and we shall not apply to him for it in vain. Doubtless

¹ See Scott's affecting reference to his own case—Force of Truth, and Practical Observations on Num. xvi. 1—19.—Also the same confession from Mr. Walker, of Truro, a minister of peculiar simplicity and most honoured devotedness to his Master's work. See his valuable collection of Tracts, entitled Practical Christianity, pp. 190, 191.

we should bear this sin in special remembrance to the end of our days ; both as an occasion of magnifying the grace of God,¹ and as an incentive to redoubled exertions throughout our future course. In order to generate in our hearts this deepened contrition : it will be well to bring frequently before our minds, and especially at the annual return of the season of our ordination, the vows, which we then took upon us : and in a new perception of their responsibility, to consecrate ourselves to God afresh, with a full determination of heart through grace to fulfil them. Thus receiving, as it were, a second commission with shame and self-reproach, and yet with thankfulness ; we shall be given to it ; we shall have an evidence in our own souls, that, though at the time of ordination we were not “ moved by the Holy Ghost,” we are so now ; and if our conscience bear witness to us, that we are now cordially renouncing whatever is inconsistent with our high and heavenly calling, we need not doubt of God’s merciful acceptance in all our labours of love, and (in confirmation of his own word) of a blessing to be conferred also on our own souls according to our labours.

¹ See 1 Tim. i. 11—16.

PART III.

**CAUSES OF MINISTERIAL INEFFICIENCY
CONNECTED WITH OUR PERSONAL
CHARACTER.**

CHAPTER I.

WANT OF ENTIRE DEVOTEDNESS OF HEART TO THE
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE paragraph (1 Tim. iv. 13—16.) condenses in the smallest compass the most important body of appropriate instruction and encouragement to Ministerial devotedness—“*Give thyself wholly to these things, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*” The effect of the Apostles’ resolution to “*give themselves unto prayer and to the Ministry of the word*”—exhibited the influence of Christian devotedness upon Ministerial success.¹ The great Shepherd, indeed, who gave himself for, gave us to, the flock;² and there is no more responsible thought connected with our work, than the obligation of giving ourselves to our people, so that they shall be led to prize us as a gift from Christ. Oh! that we might be able to tell them—‘We belong to Christ, and he has given us to you; we owe our whole selves entirely to you;³ we are “your servants for Jesus’ sake;”⁴ we have given ourselves to the work, and we desire to be in it, as if there was nothing worth living for besides: it shall form our whole pleasure and delight. We will consecrate our whole time, our whole reading, our whole mind and heart to this service.’ It will not be pretended, that there is any favourable change since the primitive times, that renders it less necessary for us than for Archippus, to “take heed to the Ministry

¹ Acts vi. 4—7.³ Rom. i. 14.² Comp. Eph. iv. 8—12.⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

which we have received in the Lord, that we fulfil it¹” —or that the Apostolical exhortations to unremitted diligence are less applicable to us than to the beloved Timothy?² Or do we suppose, that the privileges and immunities of our admirable Establishment were intended to furnish a plea for self-indulgence? Or shall we be satisfied with a certain routine of outward service, sufficient to justify us in the eyes of our Diocesan; while, as respects any painful exercises of self-denial, we are “serving the Lord with that which doth cost us nothing?”³ We are to be labourers, not loiterers, in the Lord’s vineyard; not doing his work with a reluctant heart, as if we did it not, as if we feared being losers by him, or giving him more than he deserved. ‘The pastoral dignity is the condition of a servant. It obliges a man to *devote himself entirely* to Jesus Christ, and to his Church. Both the Minister and the Ministry are only for the church. He who in this state does not apply himself entirely to the service of the church, will be treated as a thief, and a sacrilegious person. Whoever has not the spirit of his Ministry, renders all the talents and advantages useless, which he has received to serve the church. A pastor ought to have nothing at heart but the work of God and the salvation of souls. This ought to be his delight, his meat, and his life.’⁴ Let us remember, that as Ministers, we are not only, like our fellow Christians, “bought with a price,” but we are set apart, appointed, yea devoted, to this work. As entrusted, therefore, with the Church of God, we have no right “to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life,” so as to hinder an entire consecration of our services to the cause of God. So strongly was this

¹ Col. iv. 17.² 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.³ 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.⁴ Quesnel on Rom. i. 1. Ephes. iii. 1. John iv. 34.

obligation felt in the primitive age, that Cyprian declares the judgment of the church to be, that a presbyter should not entangle himself with the office of an executor. If, however, they made an absolute rule, without yielding to circumstances, yet the principle was excellent—that the Minister's constant employment in spiritual affairs, precluded him from giving the necessary attention to secular duties, though allowedly important !¹

Our responsibilities demand an entire devotedness of spirit to every soul, as if it were the sole object of our care. 'It ought therefore to be our solemn and cheerful determination, to refrain from studies, pursuits, and even recreations, that may not be made evidently subservient to the grand purpose of our Ministry. The Apostle would remind us, in our visits, journeys, the common intercourse of life, never to forget, not only our *Christian* but our *Ministerial* character. All must be stamped with its holiness: all must be a part of a system strictly adhered to, of being constantly learning, and waiting the opportunity of imparting what we have learned in the things of God.'² Mr. Cecil used to say, that the devil did not care how ministers were employed, *if it was not in*

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 4. Cypr. Epist. i. See Burkitt on Luke ix. 61, 62.

² Scott's Letters and Papers, pp. 307, 308. In another place he writes to a friend in the same spirit of fervid and habitual devotedness—'My conscience is never quiet or joyful, but when I am busy in some Ministerial employment; not merely in acquiring, but in communicating the knowledge of Divine things by my tongue and pen; not only by meditation endeavouring to affect my own heart, but by some method or other endeavouring to affect others, and stir them up to seek, trust, love, and serve the Lord. And after a multitude of thoughts about pride, ambition, &c. influencing me to be active, (and they will insinuate themselves,) I am persuaded Satan would have me while away my life in inactivity, under pretences of modesty, diffidence, and humility; and he never is wanting to furnish me with excuses for delaying or shifting services.'—Life, p. 213.

their proper work. Whether it was hunting or sporting, cards and assemblies, writing notes upon the classics, or politics, it was all one to him. 'Each might please his own taste. In this view how manly was Nehemiah's answer, four times repeated, to his subtle enemies, who would have diverted him from the Lord's immediate service—"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."¹ And does not the building of the spiritual temple require the same concentrated devotedness of heart, the same sense of primary obligation? And are we, in a similar spirit, ready to answer the suggestions of a corrupt heart, of pride, indolence, love of ease, worldliness, and unbelief—I may not, I must not, I dare not, "I cannot come down?" The true spirit of our work would "let the dead bury their dead," rather than allow them to detain us from the present and imperative duty—"Go thou, and preach the gospel of God."²

Bishop Burnet adverts to 'the great notion of the Pastoral care, which runs through our Ordination Service—that it is *to be a man's entire business*, and is to possess both his thoughts and his time.' 'What greater force or energy,'—the Bishop asks—'could be put in words, than in these? Or where could any be found, that are more weighty and more express, to show the *entire dedication of the whole man—of his time and labour, and the separating himself from all other cares, to follow this one thing with all possible application and zeal?*'³ The Clergy "have a double account to settle—an account with God, as well as an account with man; and it may happen, that, although the latter party have nothing to object against them, yet their functions may not have been adequately

¹ Nehemiah vi. 3, 4.

² Isaiah xlv. 9. Luke ix. 59, 60.

³ Pastoral Care, chap. vi.

discharged in the sight of the Great High-Priest of the Church. Even if their engagement be not exactly in the nature of a conditional contract, as far as man is concerned, yet there are certain *extra-official obligations—certain undefined, though not the less binding, duties, which every man set apart for the Ministry has undertaken to fulfil.*¹ His work must not be looked upon as an ordinary profession, to be conducted on that principle of reciprocity, which governs the common dealings of mankind. He desecrates his high calling, when he considers it in the light of a mere commercial transaction, in which a bargain is struck for a certain return of services upon the payment of a

¹ See Burnet's Past. Care, ch. viii. Mr. Richmond's Ministry may furnish a specimen of these 'undefined extra official obligations.' Besides two complete services on the Sabbath—it consisted of a Sunday evening lecture for the young—Cottage lectures on Tuesday, and latterly, also, on Thursday evenings—a lecture in the church on Friday, with weekly instruction at the workhouse, and a monthly lecture before the sacrament. Combined with this system of public instruction was the constant fulfilment of the Apostolical injunction of going from house to house. See his Life, pp. 114, 115, 588, 589. Many devoted Ministers would be "pressed out of measure, above strength," and would shortly "have the sentence of death, in themselves" from such incessant demands; and 'Christ' (as an excellent Minister said to his brother) 'is too great a Master to need, and too good a Master to require, his servants to kill themselves in his service.' Some however profess to be restrained from these 'extra-official' labours by the fear of entailing heavy burdens upon their successors. But the Lord will not require of them the same portion of work with diminished physical resources; while he justly demands of all his servants, that, as their strength, so their work shall be. While the higher, though not unreasonable, demands of many of our Diocesans, are stimulating us to increasing exertions, let us be careful, that prospective considerations do not paralyze our present energies, and that we grudge not to expend a healthful constitution in a service, in which angels might think it an honour to be engaged. Where health, strength, talents, and opportunities are vouchsafed, who will say, that such labours are uncalled for by the exigency of the case, by the voice of conscience, by the constraining influence of our Master's love, (John xxi. 15—17) or by those requirements of our Church in the Ordination vow, which her Ministers have voluntarily undertaken?

certain price. Like his heavenly pattern, he will be constantly about his Master's business; he will avail himself of times and seasons and topics, and present the truths of which he is the depository, in so judicious and pertinent a manner, that his "speech" may at all times "be seasoned with salt, and that no man may be able to accuse him of neglect, or inquire, like Esau, in the tone of mingled regret and reproach—"Hast thou not a blessing for me also?"¹

The devotedness of our "heavenly pattern" to this great work, furnishes a striking illustration of the true spirit of the Christian Ministry—"doing with our might." His whole soul was in it—intent upon one thing—subordinating relative obligations²—personal claims of convenience³—and even present necessity⁴ to the main business. No time was wasted upon trifles. Even the common intercourse and courtesies⁵ of life were made the vehicles of the most important instruction. Public occasions⁶ were improved for the same blessed purpose. The thought of relinquishing his work was intolerable.⁷ Through reproach and tribulation of the most appalling kind, he persevered to the end. The labours of single days were unprecedented in Ministerial annals;⁸ and the course of a lengthened Ministry was compressed within the contracted space of three years.

¹ Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 273—275.

² Luke ii. 49. Matt. xii. 46—50.

³ Mark vi. 34—50.

⁴ John iv. 6—14.

⁵ Luke vii. 36—50; xi. 37; xiv. 13—24.

⁶ John vii. 37.

⁷ Matt. xvi. 23.

⁸ Compare Mark i. 32—38. The parables, Matt. xiii. seem to have been delivered in the afternoon of a day that had been previously spent in the work of instruction. Doddridge remarks on another occasion, that 'no one of the prophets that we read of in the Old Testament, appears to have wrought so many beneficial miracles in his whole life, as our Lord did in this one afternoon.' Family Expositor on Matt. ix. 33. Section lxxii.

In a large measure of the same spirit did the great Apostle embody the grand principles of the Ministry. His very soul and spirit were set upon his work. Never did any hireling long for preferment, as did he to be made the organ of spiritual blessings¹ to the Church. He had a heart and tongue to speak, wherever there was an ear to hear. He was ready to preach the Gospel in the mouth of danger, even at Rome itself.² His account of one of his Ministerial courses informs us, that he commenced his work the very "first day he came into Asia"—"publicly and from house to house"—"declaring the whole counsel of God"—"keeping back nothing that was profitable"—"warning every one night and day for three years"—outwardly exposed to the "temptations" of his enemies, and inwardly "pressed in his spirit" by a tenderness, fervour, and compassion, which could find no vent but in "tears"—and determined at whatever cost to pursue his course with undaunted perseverance.³ Thus was he able to testify—"God is my witness, whom *I serve with my spirit* in the Gospel of his Son."⁴

And might we not ask—Is "God our witness?" Does he mark in us—we will not say any particular frequency of preaching—but the purpose, frame of heart, and stamp of a faithful Ministration of the Word—the spirit of a "pastor after God's own heart?"⁵

¹ Rom. i. 11, 12.

² Rom. i. 15.

³ Compare Acts xx. 18—36. Other courses of considerable extent are described Rom. xv. 18—28.

⁴ Rom. i. 9. Brainerd shows the nearest approximation to this spirit. He could scarcely give expression to the full glow of his love for his Master's work.—'I longed to be'—he would sometimes say—'as a flame of fire, continually glowing in the Divine service, preaching and building up Christ's kingdom to my latest, my dying, hour.'

⁵ Jer. iii. 15. Let us listen to Latimer's plain and faithful exhortations. Speaking of "the Shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,"—he adds—'I would

A devoted Minister feels, that there is sufficient employment for his whole life in his sacred work; and that he can never enjoy its privileges, or rightly perform its duties, except he be wholly given to it. He will therefore find time for nothing, but what will bear with more or less direct influence upon the ultimate success of his labours.

The want of Divine influence on our work should therefore suggest a close and searching scrutiny—Is the whole heart in singleness of purpose consecrated to the Christian Ministry? Mr. Brown's death-bed has given a most encouraging testimony on this subject—the result of forty years experience—‘Oh! labour, labour’ (said he to his sons) ‘to win souls to Christ. I will say this for your encouragement—When the Lord led me out to be most earnest in this way, he poured in most comfort into my own heart, so that he gave me my reward in my bosom.’¹ To the same purport was the earnest exhortation of the excellent Bishop Beveridge—‘As for those, who come to take

wish that all clergymen, the curates, parsons, and vicars, the bishops and all other spiritual persons would learn this lesson by these poor shepherds; which is, to abide by their flock, and by their sheep—to tarry among them—to be careful over them—not to run hither and thither after their own pleasure, but to tarry by their benefices, and feed their sheep with the food of God's word, and to keep hospitality, and so to feed them both soul and body. For I tell you, these poor unlearned Shepherds shall condemn many a stout and great learned clerk: for these Shepherds had but the care and charge over brute beasts, and yet were diligent to keep them and to feed them; and the others have the care over God's lambs, which he bought with the death of his Son, and yet they are so careless, so negligent, so slothful over them; yea, and the most part intendeth not to feed the sheep, but they long to be fed by the sheep: they seek only their own pass-times, they care for no more. But saith Christ to Peter—What said he? “Peter, lovest thou me?” Peter made answer, Yes. “Then feed my sheep.” And so the third time he commanded Peter to feed his sheep, &c. Sermon on Luke ii. 8—12.

¹ Brown's Life and Remains, p. 267.

upon them the office of deacon, or priest, in the Church of Christ—let me now beseech them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servants they are now to be, that from this day forward they look upon him as their great Master, and lay out themselves wholly in the service to which he calls them. And, whatsoever difficulties they meet with in it, let them follow the Apostle's example—faint not, nor be discouraged, but go on with cheerfulness and alacrity, as remembering, that they serve the best Master in the world ; one, that will not only stand by them and assist them, but reward them at last with a crown of righteousness.¹

CHAPTER II.

CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

As members of society, some intercourse with the world is a matter of necessity. To keep no company with sinners, we “ must needs go out of the world.”² *Connection with the world within prescribed limits*, is also indispensable for the due discharge of our Ministerial responsibilities, since we cannot instruct the subjects of our Ministry without personal contact and communication. It is, however, most important to ascertain the precise limits by which this intercourse must be bounded, and the principles on which it is to be conducted—lest we deviate from the Scriptural rule, transgress its requirements, lower its standard, or substitute other principles in the regulation of our conduct. Now if the prohibition of conformity to the

¹ See his Sermon on the Institution of Ministers, quoted in Bishop Mant's notes on the Ordination Service.

² 1 Cor. v. 10.

world, and the call of God to "come out and be separate,"¹ have any meaning at all, they must be supposed to warn the Minister of the sanctuary from the sports of the field or the chase, from the theatre, the ball-room, the card-table,² and the race-course; and from that unprofitable, sensual life of folly, which unconsciously hurries us on from social intercourse to the ensnaring pleasures of sin. 'A life, in which the love of the world is predominant, is incompatible with that dignified and edifying piety, which should be the distinguishing characteristic of the sacred Ministry. It is this spirit of piety alone, that can ensure to us utility.'³ For what aptness to teach can be exercised or nourished, where the taste, time, talents and activity are devoted to engagements of a secular and self-indulgent character?

Many shades of worldly conformity, most detrimental to the spiritual influence of the Christian Ministry, attach themselves peculiarly to the Clergy of the

¹ Rom. xii. 2. 2 Cor. vi. 17.

² Could Jerome, if he lived in our day, have written thus—'*Venatorem nunquam legimus sanctum?*' The following sentiments delivered *ex cathedra*, have the weight of authority as well as of intrinsic excellence. 'To speak my sentiments plainly,' (said the Bishop of Limerick at his Primary Visitation) 'I do not see how a clergyman, consistently with the sacredness and separation of his character and office; consistently with the edification of the flock committed to his charge; or consistently with the vows which he has made at his ordination, can pursue the sports of the mountain or the field; can resort to the race-ground or the theatre; can be found at the card-table or in the ball-room. In avowing these sentiments I avow the sentiments, which from the earliest ages of the church have been maintained alike by the old Catholic bishops and fathers, and by the most distinguished and illustrious churchmen of modern times.' The body of our own Ecclesiastical Law, compiled by thirty-two commissioners, in the time of Edward the Sixth, and published under his royal authority, bearing date, April, 1571, gives an accurate and elevated standard—'*Non sint comptores, non aleatores, non aucupes, non venatores, non sycophantæ, non otiosi aut supini; sed sacrarum literarum studiis, et prædicationi verbi et orationibus pro Ecclesiâ ad Dominum diligenter incumbant.*'

³ Massillon.

Establishment. Their rank in society, their education, their mode of living, and the necessity which is commonly felt for keeping up appearances—all are circumstances, which need the control of a heavenly and mortified mind, lest they should prove offences in our Ministry.¹ Perhaps few of us are aware of the keen eye, with which our dress, furniture, tables, and household are scrutinized, and the minuteness of comparison instituted between our ministration and personal habits. Mr. Scott's observations upon this subject are entitled to great consideration. After remarking upon the inconveniences and temptations of Ministers indulging an affectation of appearance beyond their legitimate station, he adds—'If we form our judgment on this subject from the Holy Scripture, we shall not think of finding the true Ministers of Christ among the higher classes of society *in matters of external appearances or indulgence*. If a Minister thinks, that the attention of the great and noble requires him to copy their expensive style of living, he grievously mistakes the matter. For this will generally forfeit the opinion before entertained of his good sense and regard to propriety;² and his *official* declarations concerning the vanity of earthly things, and the Christian's indifference to them, will be suspected of insincerity; while it is observed, that he conforms to the world, as

¹ Jerome's Letter to Nepotian, though scanty in Christian doctrine, contains some important hints on the general subject of Clerical conduct. It may be found appended to 'Bennet's Directions for the Study of Divinity and the Articles of the Church,' 12mo. 1715. An abstract is given by Burnet, *Pastoral Care*, chap. iv. Professor Campbell has some forcible remarks upon the same subject—On the *Pastoral Character*, Sect. ii. Compare also Secker's Charges, pp. 242, 243.

² The Tract just alluded to may perhaps convey a useful hint. 'Facile contemnitur clericus, qui, sæpe vocatus ad prandium, ire non recusat. Nunquam petentes, raró accipiamus rogati. Quesnel gives the same rule on Luke xi. 37.

far, or even farther than his circumstances will admit ; and thus respect will often be changed into disgust.' At a later period of life he writes thus—' I am sorry to say, that worldly prudence, and the desire of making provision for families, not only for necessary things, but for *gentility and affluence*, is, in my opinion, eating up the life of spirituality, and simple trust in the Lord, even among those who preach scriptural doctrines. I believe these are *clogged in their Ministry*—nay, sink in general estimation, and are *excluded from usefulness more, than they are aware of.*'¹ Admitting even that our income allows the indulgence of expensiveness in our style of appearance, yet is it not a point of Christian forbearance to refrain ? Is it not most important to show, that our heart is not set upon these things ; that Christian plainness and simplicity are our deliberate choice ; and that it is a matter of conscience, and of privilege, to devote to the service of God the expenditure, that might have been wasted upon "cield houses,"² or other useless decorations.

A serious hinderance also to the Ministry sometimes arises from social intercourse with our respective neighbourhoods. Not that religion inculcates any breach of good breeding, habits of moroseness, or declaiming with contemptuous severity against the follies of the world. This is neither the spirit of the Gospel of love, nor the spirit that should distinguish its professors, and much less its Ministers ; and what is said or done in this temper, had far better have been forborne, than exhibited in a garb of such unkindly roughness. Courtesy is a Christian duty, fully

¹ Scott's Remarks on the Character of Demas, in his notes on Pilgrim's Progress. Life, pp. 395, 396. And compare Letters and Papers, pp. 476—482. Works, x. 224, 225. ² See Hag. i. 4.

consistent with the exercise of Christian faithfulness; and, under the decided influence of Scriptural restraint, often an effectual means of melting down prejudice, and conciliating goodwill. But *latet anguis in herbá*. The double guard of watchfulness and prayer is most needful to preserve the single eye, and the heart devoted in simplicity to God. It is enchanted ground. A prudent Christian dares not walk on it without a special call. The late excellent Mr. Hervey resolved—‘Never to go into any company, where he could not obtain access for his Master.’ And at least we should determine to venture into no society, but where we *sincerely desire and endeavour* to introduce our Master. There is indeed “a time for keeping silence,”² and “keeping our mouth with a bridle,” in the presence of the ungodly; lest, by “giving that which is holy unto dogs, and casting our pearls before swine,” we should provoke a needless excitement of enmity against the Gospel. But (as Dr. Watts has well observed)—‘I doubt this caution has been carried much further by our own cowardice and carnality of spirit, than David ever practised it in the thirty-ninth Psalm, or than Jesus Christ meant it in the seventh of Matthew.’³ Certainly if we are “dumb with silence, and hold our peace even from good,” without feeling, like David under these circumstances, our “sorrows to be stirred;”⁴ it is but too plain, that we have lost that distinction of “the servants of Christ,” which it would have been our honour to have preserved, that our Christian prudence has degenerated into worldly cowardice and that our conversation with the world has been regulated by the fear of man,

¹ 1 Peter iii. 8.² Eccles. iii. 7.³ Watts’s humble attempt towards a revival, pp. 88, 89.⁴ Psalm xxxix. 3.

heart and in hand, spreading a spiritual savour
the common walks of society, and stamping us
ually with the mark of confessors of Christ in
midst of a world, who hold him still in the same
empt, as when eighteen centuries since they nailed
to the cross. There must be something defective
, except we bring an atmosphere with us, which
ore or less instantaneously felt. It is the want
his high tone of character, that makes our private
strations so pointless and ineffective.² For when
chial visits have been unaccompanied with one

uch as Mark viii. 38. Archbishop Secker remarks, that
are apt to fail in not always appearing, in the common
ourse of life, sufficiently penetrated with the importance
r function, or sufficiently assiduous to promote the ends of
ission.' He warns us also, that 'talking with great earnest-
about worldly affairs, or with great delight about diversions
rises, betrays a mind over-much set upon them. Nay,
eing only in a very peculiar degree good judges of such
rs, or of any that are unconnected with our office, will,
ss we have some special call to them) be commonly thought
ply, that we have studied and love them beyond what we
; to the neglect of our proper business—If practical Chris-

searching inquiry respecting the state of the soul, it is easily supposed; that, as no suspicion was thrown out, none was entertained; and that, if there was not quite so much religion as with some others, yet that there was no ground for alarm, nor had the solemn statements of the pulpit any specific reference to them.

The importance of studying urbanity of behaviour in our intercourse with the world, is sometimes pleaded as an excuse for avoiding the direct offence of the cross. But let it be remembered, that God never honours a compromising spirit. The character of our profession with the world must not be merely negative or inoffensive. It must be marked by a wise, tender, but unflinching, exhibition of the broad line of demarcation, which, under the most favourable circumstances of mutual accommodation, still separates the world and the church from real communion with each other. Did the Apostle mean by that emphatic term—"the course of this world"¹—no more than the round of giddy dissipation or vicious pleasure? Had his prohibition of worldly conformity, no regard to the principles, the standard, the taste, the external decency of worldliness? Does not his warning against even contact with the world²—(deduced from the reason and fitness of things, as well as from the express declaration of God)—directly apply to all the sources of interest, the fellowship, the habit of mind and conversation, which by the Scriptural standard are proved to be—"not of the Father, but of the world?"³ Or will an evangelical accuracy of doctrine, and correctness of deportment stamp our profession with the broad seal of conformity to our Master's image?—

¹ Eph. ii. 2.

² "Touch not the unclean thing." 2 Cor. vi. 17, with 14—16.

³ 1 John ii. 16.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”¹ ‘Doubtless’ (as Archbishop Secker reminds us)—‘we should endeavour to make religion agreeable; but not to make ourselves agreeable by leading our company to forget religion. We should, ‘every one of us, please his neighbour for his good;’ but not so ‘please men,’ as to fail in the character of “Servants of Christ.”² We should be made in a *fitting sense and measure*, “all things to all men, that we may by all means save some;” but we shall lose ourselves, not save others, if we are quite different persons in the pulpit and out of it.’³ These admirable sentiments fix the precise character and Scriptural limits of Christian courtesy, bounding it by the line of Christian edification, and distinguishing it by an entire disregard of our own interest, and a single devotedness to the main object of the salvation of immortal souls.⁴ Indeed a successful attempt to ingratiate ourselves with the world, should rather afford matter for godly jealousy, than anticipation of advantage. To have attached the world by adventitious accomplishments to ourselves, while the Master, whom we profess to venerate, is still with them a “despised and rejected” Saviour, to a mind, reflecting upon Scripture principles,⁵ is a matter of far greater alarm than of self-complacency. If they could not endure the conciliating attractiveness⁶ of the Son of God, even whilst devoting himself to their service at an infinite cost to himself⁷—if they could count the great Apostle—(endued with so large a portion of his Master’s loveliness of deportment)—“as the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things.”⁸

¹ John xvii. 14, 16.² Gal. i. 10.³ Charges, p. 235.⁴ Compare Rom. xv. 2. 1 Cor. ix. 22. x. 33.⁵ See Luke vi. 22.⁶ See Matt. xi. 16, 17.⁷ Compare John xv. 18, with 13, 14.⁸ Compare 1 Cor. ix. 20—22, with 1 Cor. iv. 13.

they can only court our society upon the perception, that we approximate to their standard rather than to those heavenly models.

But this Ministerial association with the world is justified upon principle. It is said to operate beneficially, as a restraint upon unbecoming conversation or dissipated recreation. It is even conceived to promise positive advantage, in recommending the cause of religion to more general acceptance. Yet surely the transgression of a plain command, having a primary reference to Ministers,¹ can be nothing less than wilful sin :² while the motive pleaded in its extenuation, marks the character of the sin, to be "doing evil that good may come." The best-intentioned motives can never justify the infringement of a Divine obligation, even if (what in the present case is contrary to fact and experience) the prospect of eventual benefit were both assured and satisfactory. But who does not know, that the awe and restraint of the Ministerial presence cannot reach to the root of the evil? Its temporary and inefficient influence therefore has been dearly purchased, by a lowering of the tone of the Ministerial character, by a yielding conformity to the taste, habits and conversation of the world, and by a virtual sanction of a defective and erroneous standard of conduct.³ Would the Levitical high-priests have de-

¹ The reference 2 Cor. vi. 17. is to Isaiah lii. 11—a prophetic address to the Ministers of the sanctuary on their return from Babylon, though subsequently extended under the sanction of infallible authority, as a general rule of conduct under the Christian dispensation. Poli Synopsis, in Isaiah, lii. 11, and comp. Ezra viii. 24—30.

² 1 John iii. 4.

³ 'I fell into a mistake, when a young man,' (observes Mr. Cecil) 'in thinking, that I could talk to men of the world on their own ground, and could thus win them over to mine. I was fond of painting, and so I talked with them on that subject. This pleased them : but I did not consider, that I gave a consequence to their pursuits, which did not belong to them ; whereas I ought

scended from their sacred elevation of immediate intercourse with God, to participate in the frivolities of sober and decorous worldliness? And why should our character, under a more spiritual dispensation, be less separate, or our standard less heavenly? If indeed this connexion with the world should recommend us to their kindly consideration, yet no additional regard to our Master accrues from it; since we have usually been unable to mention his name with any glow of interest, nor has any feature of his holy character been illustrated or embodied in the spirituality of our conversation.¹

It is allowed indeed, that our Divine Master occasionally associated with men, whose profession was decidedly adverse to his doctrine. But he could breathe a polluted atmosphere with perfect security,

to have endeavoured to raise them above these, that they might engage in higher. I did not see this at the time; *but I now see it to have been a great error.* Cecil's Remains—a work abounding with most important thoughts upon the subject of the Christian Ministry. 'That man is mistaken,' (observes Quesnel) 'who thinks to prevail upon the world, by conforming himself to its fashions and manners. The world will much sooner corrupt the heart, which opens itself thereto. On Matt. xi. 8.

¹ Massillon warned his clergy most pointedly against this species of self-indulgent delusion.—'We often,' (he observes) 'persuade ourselves, that we ought to adopt or acquiesce in the taste, the language, and the manners of the world, that we may not be unacceptable companions; but when the world courts, adopts, and is delighted with a Minister of the Gospel, *that Pastor gives a decisive proof*, that he ceases to regard the decorum of his station, and the respectability of his character. "If ye were of the world"—said our Lord to his disciples—"the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." No, my brethren, the *world does not run after a holy and respectable Pastor. Let us not deceive ourselves.* To purchase the friendship and esteem of the world, we must sacrifice a certain part of the dignity and gravity of our Ministry. *The world does not give up in the smallest degree its baneful prejudices and dangerous maxims, in order to unite itself with us. No! we must give up our consistency of character; to be admitted into its societies.*' Charges.

and therefore might venture, where the dictates of common prudence would forbid those to follow, whose constitutions are pre-disposed to contagion. Besides, his intercourse with the world was uniformly that of an Instructor not of a Conformist; and he accomplished his important designs, not by accommodating his conversational subjects to their taste (except indeed when illustrating his instructions from the topics and circumstances of the day,) but by chaining down their wondering attention to “the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”¹ But is our intercourse with the world thus conformed to our Master’s pattern? Are we ready to do “the hard and rough work of bringing God into his own world?”² Or are we not too easily satisfied with the influence of outward restraints, while no plain testimony has been delivered for him, “whose we are, and whom we” profess to “serve?” It has been justly remarked, that “a worldly state of mind is not less destructive of true holiness than gross sin.”³ The example of Demas, the fellow-labourer of the Apostle, stands as a beacon at the close of the Ministerial Epistles, to remind us—while excited in our course by the glorious prospects of eternity⁴—of the need of

¹ Compare p. 147.

² Cecil’s Remains, ‘Examine, when you mix with the world, if duty calls you—if it is for the good of men, and the glory of God—if it is his work you are going to do? Look up, and you will find, it was so with your Master. If he manifested himself in a village of Jewry, it was to do the work of his Father; if at a marriage, it was to show his power, and to command authority to his doctrine: if in the house of a publican, it was to save a child of Abraham; if at Jerusalem on the feast day, it was to purge the temple.’ Massillon.

³ Bishop of Winchester’s Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 175. ‘Consider this also—*which is a great truth*—that every degree of love to the world is so much taken from the love of God.’ Bishop Taylor’s Advice to his Clergy.

⁴ Compare 2 Tim. iv. 10. with verses 6—8.

watchful carefulness against this baneful snare of our Ministry.¹

Upon the full consideration of the subject, the Writer is constrained to express his decided conviction, that a very considerable proportion of Ministerial inefficiency may be traced to the source of worldly conformity. This needs no proof in the too frequent cases of decided love of pleasure and dissipation. ‘For’ (as Massillon asks his clergy) ‘after having fully mixed in the diversions and follies of the world, can you appear in a Christian pulpit, impressed with a sense of the importance of the Gospel and zealous for its success?’ Of such Ministers we would desire to speak “even weeping,” that they are the sores of the church—that they have given more strength to the cause of separation, than the most powerful objections either to our established formularies or govern-

¹ Not wishing to interrupt the direct line of argument in the text—we throw into the form of a note the suggestion (applying with equal decision to Ministers to every department of the Church)—whether an engrossing interest in *worldly politics* does not sometimes operate unfavourably upon the spirituality of Christian Ministrations? ‘*Politics and party*’ (Bishop Burnet observed of his day) ‘eat out among us, not only study and learning; but that which is the only thing that is more valuable—a *true sense of religion*, with a *sincere zeal* in advancing that for which the Son of God lived and died, and to which those who are received into holy orders have vowed to dedicate their lives and labours.’—These remarks—important in themselves—derive additional weight from being found in the preface to the last edition of the Pastoral Care, written only three years before the Bishop’s death, when we may hope that the remembrance of his own course, (far too political for the sanctity of his office) suggested the caution. It is not meant that the Clergy should neglect the exercise of their civil privileges, or the enforcement of civil obligations. But surely the Minister of a “kingdom not of this world” ought to be ready to say of his own interest in the politics of this world—“Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth.” The more we are of politicians, and party men, the less we are of Ministers, and the less of unction, fruitfulness, and comfort will be found in our work.—See some useful hints to Ministers in Scott’s Life, pp. 306, 307.

ment—and (what is far more fearful)—that they are charged with the awful responsibility of dragging with them immortal souls down to perdition by their negligence, or by the positive influence of their example.

But is not also the lax, indulgent approximation to the spirit of the world—either in our general habit and appearance—or in our intercourse with the world—a leading, though not always a tangible, cause of Ministerial failure? Even the faithful exhibition of the cross must be materially weakened by a want of the corresponding exhibition of its power, in crucifying its Ministers to the lusts and affections of the world. A connexion with the world beyond the point of clear duty, (or even within these narrow bounds, without a heavenly temper) must bring us into a worldly atmosphere, which deadens the vigorous actings of a spiritual life, till, like the torpēdo, we benumb every thing we touch. Conscience in a tender and susceptible state, might almost determine the question—What is the effect of such connexions upon the spiritual frame? Has there not been in this atmosphere a closer communion with the world than with God? Has not the spirit of prayer been well-nigh extinguished, and delight in *the more spiritual exercises* of our work fearfully lost? And does not our Ministry thus become (perhaps unconsciously to ourselves) weak, general, and indefinite upon the main point of separation from the world. Or, even if our exhortations reach the Scriptural standard of decision, must not their power be wholly counteracted by this compromising spirit of the world?

Scriptural and earnest statements of truth, combined with sociable conformity to the world, will give

no offence, and bring no conviction.¹ Cowper's line — 'If parsons fiddle, why may'nt laymen dance?' — has at least as much truth as wit in it. If we go one step into the world, our flock will take the sanction to go two; the third will be still more easy, and the atmosphere more enticing, till at last it proves, "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."² "The Minister, therefore, who would not have his people give into worldly conformity such as he disapproves, must keep at a considerable distance himself. If he walks near the brink, others will fall down the precipices."³ 'A preacher' (remarks a beautiful expositor) 'who enjoys the smiles of the world, can hope for little success from God;' but 'a Minister of the Church, who is entirely disengaged from the love of earthly things, is a great treasure, and a great "consolation" to her.'⁴

¹ 'The "way is still narrow," and "the gate is" yet "strait." The world will allow us to say this officially, to read it in the lesson of the day, and to amplify the solemn saying in a sermon. But if we *mean* what we preach, and awaken men's belief of our sincerity in the interval between one Sunday and another, then begins the debate between a Minister and his flock. So long as he is not missing in the circles of pleasure, he may deliver without suspicion the most fearful warnings of God against a slumbering world; and none will molest him. But the moment his own example comes in aid of his doctrine, and irritates the consciences of those around, his creed is discovered to be false and foolish.'—Antichrist. By Rev. J. Riland. Pp. 49, 50.

² Prov. vii. 23.

³ Scott's Life, p. 122.

⁴ Quesnel on 1 Cor. ii. 3. Acts iv. 36. See some striking thoughts on the subject of this Chapter, in Rev. D. Wilson's Prefatory Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. liii.

CHAPTER III.

THE FEAR OF MAN.

WHAT conscientious Minister is not painfully reminded of the truth of the Divine aphorism—"The fear of man bringeth a snare?"¹ Perhaps no Ministerial temptation is more specious in its character, or more subtle and diversified in its operation. Its connexion with worldly conformity is sufficiently evident from the recollection of its paralyzing influence upon Christian boldness. Mr. Scott, in the early part of his Ministry, appears to have suffered severely from the power of this temptation; and there are few of us of Lavater's self-observant stamp, but will have some sympathy in his graphical delineation of his difficulties—"This" (he observes) "is the last victory the Christian gains—Here I find my own deficiency, as much or more than in any other respect: and often I feel an inward timidity, when about to preach upon an unpopular doctrine, or expose a foible, which some one of my congregation, whom I otherwise love and esteem, is remarkable for: and in every instance I feel the greatest reluctance to resign the good opinion, or act contrary to the judgment of those for whom I have esteem. It is true, I am peculiarly bound to strive against this, by reason of my Ministerial office. I am to speak boldly, "not as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of God"—and therefore I endeavour to master all these fears, to act implicitly as my conscience suggests, without respect of persons. Conformity to others in things unchristian, the fear of man, a servile spirit of time-serving, &c.

¹ Prov. xxix. 25.

are the faults of Ministers, *and effectually hinder even those* that desire it from performing the most important parts of their Ministry, both in public preaching, and by private application. But this kind of spirit goeth not out but by a very spiritual and devout course of life. Indeed its expulsion is the gift of God, and is especially to be sought for from him.”¹

Our public Ministrations are continually infested by this snare. Conviction of duty is often nearly sacrificed to it. Subjects uncongenial to the taste and habits of influential men in our congregation are passed by, or held back from their just and offensive prominence, or touched with the tenderest scrupulosity, or expanded with wide and undefined generalities—so that the sermons (like letters put into the post-office without a direction) are addressed to no one—No one owns them.—No one feels any personal interest in their contents. A Minister under this deteriorating influence will be chiefly exercised in general truths devoid of particular application—more in what is pleasing than what is direct and useful. Many other subjects may be equally necessary, or indeed more important, but these are more conciliating. There is thus a continual conflict between conscience and the world—‘I ought to speak for conscience’ sake; but I dare not speak for fear of the world.’ The offensive truth must be smoothed, disguised, and intermixed, until it is attenuated into an insipid, pointless, and inoperative statement. The spirit of cold refinement, which gives occasion to this compromising Ministration, is one of the most baneful hinderances to the

¹ Scott’s Life, pp. 117, 118. The Apostle appears to intimate the power of this Ministerial hinderance, in exhorting Timothy to “stir up all his gifts” of “power, love, and of a sound mind” (which—and not “the *spirit of fear*” had been given him by the imposition of hands) to resist its influence. 2 Tim. i. 6—8.

efficiency of our work. Whether in or out of the Church, it is the real spirit of the world. It will tolerate and even approve a modified system of Evangelical truth, while the entire and unflinching presentment of the Gospel in its native simplicity and spirituality is unacceptable. Mr. Cecil remarks—
 ‘ There is too much of a low, managing, contriving, manœuvring temper of mind, among us. We are laying ourselves out, more than is expedient, to meet one man’s taste, and another man’s prejudices. The Ministry is a grand and holy affair; and it should find in us a simple habit of spirit, and a holy but humble indifference to all consequences.’¹

Our general course of Ministration is also ‘ sore let and hindered ’ by the operation of this principle. Indeed, there is no end to the subterfuges of cowardice and self-deception, when “ the wisdom of this world ” has begun to prevail against the simplicity of faith.— How seldom do the rich and poor share alike in the faithfulness of Ministerial reproof! How hard is it, instead of “ receiving honour one of another,” to “ seek the honour that cometh from God only ! ”² How ready are we to listen to cautions from influential quarters against excessive zeal ! How much more afraid are we of others going too far, than of coming short ourselves of the full requisitions of the Scriptural standard ! How many are the cases of conviction, where the “ light is hid under a bushel,” or exhibited only to the friends of the Gospel ! How many shrink from “ witnessing

¹ Cecil’s Remains. Luther’s rule was—‘ When one cometh into the pulpit, he is much perplexed to see so many heads before him ; when I stand there, I look upon none, but imagine, they are all blocks that are before me.’ Table Talk, chap. 22.

² John v. 44. ‘ A man sometimes suffers himself to be lulled asleep by the agreeable noise of a flattering world, which praises a Pastor for performing one half of his duty, while God condemns him for the neglect of the other.’ Quesnel on 2 Tim. iv. 5.

a good confession," except under the shelter of some great name! How often are opportunities of usefulness neglected! and the "endurance of afflictions" in "making full proof of our Ministry" ¹ avoided from the fear of the cross! We cannot (we say) do all at once—We hope to gain our point by little and little—We dare not, therefore, by taking a bold step upon the impulse of the moment, close the avenues of distant and important advantage. But does our conscience clear us of a desire to follow our Master, without "taking up *the daily cross*?" Are we not afraid of "being fools for Christ's sake?" Do we not sometimes "become all things to all men," when we ought to remember, that "if we yet please men, we cannot be the servants of Christ."² Christian prudence indeed is a most valuable grace in its own place, connexion, and measure, and the want of it has often brought with it great inconvenience. But except it be the exercise of the principle of faith, combined with boldness, and encircled with a warm atmosphere of Christian love,³ it will degenerate, and become the time-serving spirit of the world. "The fear of man" often assumes the name of prudence, while a worldly spirit of unbelief is the dominant, though disguised principle. It operates also in the selection of society—often leading the undecided to prefer association with their brethren of a lower standard—or even with the world, rather than with those, whose Ministry more distinctly bears the mark of the cross.

But *the fear of the professing Church* is also a serious part of this temptation. We are afraid to

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

² Gal. i. 10. 'How sweet it is to have this testimony in our conscience, that one has not been afraid of men, when it was necessary to serve God.' Quesnel on 1 Thess. ii. 2.

³ Compare 2 Tim. i. 7.

exhibit the doctrines of grace in their fulness and prominence, lest we should be thought unmindful of the enforcement of practical obligation. The freeness of the Gospel invitations, and the unreserved display of Evangelical privileges, are often fettered by the apprehension of giving indulgence to Antinomian licentiousness. The detailed exposition of relative duties is partially withheld from the fear of the imputation of legality. What further proof is needed to illustrate the retarding influence of this temptation upon our Ministry, than the recollection of two Apostles, beguiled for a short moment to deny the faith of the Gospel? ¹ “With me” (said another Apostle to his people, whose determined resistance to the weakness of his brethren was the honoured means of their restoration) “it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord.” ² Indeed the work of grace in our own hearts is obscured, except the sole aim in our work be the approbation of God; nor can we maintain our peace of mind, except we feel, that we *have but One to please*—that “One is our Master, even Christ.” ³ Nor is this supreme regard to our great Master less important, as insuring the success of our work. Where the truth “is imprisoned,” ⁴ if not “in unrighteousness,” yet in unbelief—there must be a want of power upon our Ministration. The direct violation of Christian integrity has a necessary tendency to enfeeble exertion,—by diverting our mind from that main object—which should be always directing our whole time and energies, and compared with which every other object is utterly unimportant—the edification and salvation of our people.

¹ Gal. ii. 11—14.

³ Matt. xxiii. 8.

² 1 Cor. iv. 3.

⁴ Rom. i. 18, in the Greek.

The voice of conscience and duty speaks with a weaker tone in a worldly atmosphere. The habits of self-indulgence are strengthened, and the exercises of self-denial proportionably diminished in frequency and effectiveness. Thus, as the heart is more in the world, it is less in our work; our duties are consequently performed with reluctance, and unproductive in their results. Though we would by no means advocate indiscretion, yet well-intentioned imprudence is far better than the frigid wisdom of this world; and it will invariably be found, that those that act openly with an honest freedom (though they may probably commit mistakes) will be generally borne out, and find their path ultimately smoothed; while the temporizing spirit, that aims to please both God and man, will meet with disappointment from both. Where God is not honoured, he will not honour. And in defect of that Christian boldness, that becomes our Master's cause, our people, under the influence of our example, will sink into the same benumbed spirit, while their confidence in us will be materially weakened by the manifest evidence of our Ministerial inefficiency and unfruitfulness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WANT OF CHRISTIAN SELF-DENIAL.

It may be generally remarked, that, unless the Ministry exhibit the self-denying character of the cross of Christ, it is the Christian Ministry in the letter only, not in the spirit; it is not the work, that God has engaged to bless. The motives to this Ministerial principle (were it not for the strong

current of counteracting influence) would be irresistible. The impressive solemnity of Ordination (in which we voluntarily bound ourselves to '*lay aside the study of the world and the flesh*'¹) might be thought to give at the very outset an impulse to a course of habitual self-denial in our consecration to the service of God. But there is a continual struggle to maintain with natural self-indulgence—the influence of old habits—(perhaps the habits of our former unconverted state)—combining to lower the Scriptural standard of exertion. The cultivation, therefore, and exercise of *the habit of self-denial*, are the springs of the most beneficial Ministerial activity; and the want, or the enervation, of this habit proportionably relaxes the operation of Christian motives and encouragements. Archbishop Leighton admirably sets forth John the Baptist, as an example of the spirit and temper of Christian Ministers—'to live, as much as may be in their condition and station, disengaged from the world—not following the vain delights and ways of it—not bathing in the solaces and pleasures of earth, and entangling themselves in the care of it; but *sober and modest, and mortified in their way of living*; making it *their main business not to please the flesh*, but to do service to their Lord, to walk in his ways, and prepare his way for him in the hearts of his people.'² The Apostle sets before us the habitual temperance of the wrestler, as the illus-

¹ Exhortation in the Ordination of Priests: that is (as Archbishop Secker expounds it) 'not making either gross pleasures, or more refined amusements, even literary ones unconnected with your profession—or power, or profit, or advancement, or applause, your great aim in life; but labouring chiefly to qualify yourselves for doing good to the souls of men, and applying carefully to that purpose whatever qualifications you attain.'—Instructions to Candidates for Orders, appended to his Charges.

² Lectures on Matt. iii. Works, vol. iii. 25.

tration of his own Ministerial exercises, and as the appointed mean of preserving his Christian steadfastness;¹ the necessity for which was in no respect diminished by his high attainments in the Christian life. The missionary Eliot is said to have ‘ become so nailed unto the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the grandeurs of this world were unto him just what they would be to a dying man. He persecuted the lust of the flesh with a continual antipathy; and when he has thought that a Minister had made much of himself, he has gone to him with that speech—‘ Study mortification, brother, study mortification.’² We might indeed apply the Apostle’s remark on a subject not wholly dissimilar—“ If a man know not how to rule *his own* self, “ how shall he take care of the church of God ? ”³ The fidelity he owes to God requires the abridgment or relinquishment of whatever is inconsistent with his double obligation

¹ 1 Cor ix. 25—27.

² Mather’s life of Eliot. His biographer, in the same spirit, on his entrance on the Ministry, having met with the important remark—‘ that the want of mortification in a Minister is very often the cause of the unsuccessfulness of his Ministry ’ resolved to read over Dr. Owen’s valuable Treatise on Mortification, with some other books for instruction and direction on the same subject.—Life of Cotton Mather, by his son. An excellent abridgment of which may be found among a valuable system of Christian Biography, now publishing by the Religious Tract Society. See some valuable hints on the subject of Christian Mortification, in the Life of Owen Stockton, republished in the same series. Henry Martyn appears to have deeply felt the incalculable value of Christian self-denial in the work of the Ministry—‘ A despicable indulgence in lying in bed ’ (he writes soon after his Ordination) ‘ gave me such a view of the softness of my character, that I resolved on my knees to lead a life of more self-denial; the tone and vigour of my mind rose rapidly: all those duties, from which I usually shrink, seemed recreations. I collected all the passages from the four gospels that had any reference to this subject. It is one, on which I need to preach to myself, and mean to preach to others.’ Martyn’s Life, p. 68.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 5.

of "giving himself continually to prayer and to the Ministry of the word." He may "escape," indeed, "the pollutions that are in the world through lust;" but the subtle operation of indolence, or the indulgence of levity in manners or conversation, still besets him, even in the society of religious professors, with an influence as injurious as worldly dissipation.¹

But the general habit of self-denial in its application to the wide subject of the Ministry will admit of more detailed illustration.

It should be visible in *our manners and communication with our people*. The ordinary remove of a young Minister from the University to a country parish brings him into a new world. His intercourse, hitherto conducted with men on his own level—men of good breeding, education, and intelligence—must now be exchanged for contact with the lower department of society, men unfurnished in their minds, and engaged in pursuits utterly uncongenial with taste and refinement. Nor is he at liberty (as in the common walks of life) to decline their intercourse. He has bound himself by the deepest responsibility to live for them and with them, on terms not only of consideration and respect, but of mutual confidence and love. His obvious duty of "condescending to men of low estate" must be formed upon the basis of self-denial. He must acquaint himself with their manners, their modes

¹ It was a most important remark of Ecolampadius, animadverting, in his celebrated Epistle to the Waldenses, upon the injunction of the celibacy of priests: 'It is not marriage that spoils priests, but *sloth, self-indulgence, and the fear of the cross.*' Scott's Continuation of Milner, vol. i. 147. Dr. Watts's caution will explain this remark with valuable minuteness: 'Guard' (says he to his young Minister)—'against a love of pleasure, a sensual temper, an indulgence of appetite, an excessive relish of wine or dainties; this carnalizes the soul, and gives occasion to the world to reproach but too justly'.—Humble Attempt, pp. 80, 81.

of thinking and expression, and their connexions with one another, in order to bring them under the direct and immediate influence of an effective Ministration. The dignified condescension of our Divine Master's Ministry furnishes the best pattern for his servants. He "spake the words unto" the people, not as in his infinite wisdom he was able to speak, but "as they" in their infantine state of intelligence "were able to bear:"¹ and he invited them to "learn of him," in the assurance, that he was "meek and lowly in heart."² The want of conformity to this pattern shuts up the avenues of confidence, and consequently the prospects of success. It gives a force of repulsion rather than of attraction to Ministerial intercourse. The "rough places," instead of being "made smooth," are made more rough and impervious.³

The exercise of Christian self-denial will be called for in *the duties of the Ministry*.⁴ Our labour will be often demanded with considerable sacrifice of personal inconvenience. Thus it was with our Master. His food and rest were even forgone or forgotten in the

¹ Mark iv. 33.

² Matt. xi. 29.

³ Bishop Wilson's sentiments on this point were those of one, who had deeply imbibed his Master's spirit.—'The greatest prelate in the Church is he, who is most conformable to the example of Christ, by humility, charity, and care of his flock, and who for Christ's sake, will be a servant to the servants of God.' And again—'God give me a true and prudent humility; to have nothing of the secular governors—to attend the flock of Christ as a servant—to look back upon him as my pattern—to study his conduct and spirit—to spend and be spent for my flock, and that I may never strive to live at ease, in plenty, in luxury, repose, and independence.' *Sacra Privata*.

⁴ To a person, who lamented to Dr. Johnson, that he had not been a clergyman, because he considered the life of a clergyman to be an easy and comfortable life—he replied—'The life of a conscientious clergyman is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. No, sir; I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life; nor do I envy the clergyman, who makes it an easy life.'

immediate pressure.¹ Seasons of necessary retirement were interrupted without an upbraiding word.² Hunger, thirst, cold, or fatigue set no bounds to the determined forgetfulness of himself in his Father's work. And should we not be ready for the exercise of self-denial in giving up our ease, convenience, or comfort, for our people's sake—when called, for instance, from an hour of legitimate indulgence to the visitations of the sick? It was said of Mr. Grimshaw, (could it be said of many of us?) that 'night and day were the same to him, when he was desired to visit the sick. He has been known to *walk several miles in the night, in storms of snow, when few people would venture out of their doors, to visit a sick person.*'³ In the work of instruction the calls of our people will often give unseasonable interruption to our studies. There will be much to bear from their ignorance, weakness, and sometimes from their impertinence. Watchfulness will be needed against the appearance of harshness or petulance, which might "turn the lame and diseased out of the way," when "rather it ought to be healed."⁴ The meanest of our people must have his full share of our interest and regard. Every scruple and difficulty that he may lay before you must be carefully considered. What seems trifling to us, may be important to him. His doubts and perplexities are sacred to him, and require the same tender sensibility of treatment, as if they were sacred to us.

There is also the imperceptibly growing tendency of old age to abated vigour and activity, which brings a chilling frost or damp upon Christian Ministrations,

¹ Compare John iv. 6, 31—34.

² Compare Mark i. 35—38. vi. 31—34.

³ Newton's Life of Grimshaw, p. 102. For parallel illustrations of Ministerial self-denial, compare 'Memoirs of Oberlin,' p. 216.

⁴ Heb. xii. 13.

and in every way gives advantage to the ever-watchful enemy to counteract or paralyze a course of usefulness by sowing the seeds of division. Massillon speaks to this point with much impressiveness—‘Never’ (says he) ‘consider your Ministry at any period of it, as a situation of honourable repose. *Think not of appropriating any time to yourself, if you can by a different application of it preserve only one soul from perdition.* Content not yourselves with going through your public and ordinary duties, after which we are ready to persuade ourselves, that we are discharged from every other. Let not age itself, let not the long and active discharge of your Ministerial avocations, in which you have grown old, suggest to you a legitimate reason for ceasing from the combat, and of at length enjoying the repose, to which, after so many years of labour, you may seem to be entitled. Rather let your “youth be renewed like the eagle.” Zeal may supply powers, which nature may in appearance refuse. These precious remains of decay are honourable to the Ministry. Let not old age become a motive to any indulgence, which may not be strictly consistent at the close of a life dedicated to the discharge of the pastoral obligations. Continue to abound in the work of the Lord.’¹

This principle of self-denial must also controul and direct our *Ministerial study*. The importance of the habit of study has been already noticed.² But no less important is the controul to be exercised over it. The

¹ Charges, pp. 122, 123. “*Rest*” (said the apostolical Bishop Wilson, speaking of himself) “*is a crime in one, who has promised to labour all the days of his Life.*” *Sacra Privata*. It was a frequent and important petition of Mr. Whitfield—‘that the Lord would keep me from growing slack in the latter stages of my journey.’ Mr. Scott alludes to his own need of this petition. (*Life*, p. 280.) But who does not need it in reference to the *early* as well as ‘the latter stages of the journey?’

² Part I. Chap. vii. Sect. I.

education of clergymen being of a literary character, 'it will easily be perceived, that an ardour for extra-professional studies is a temptation exactly fitted to their situation or previously formed habits, and one by which they are more likely to be seduced, than by others of a less specious appearance.' And thus 'the literary pursuits of a Minister will in many cases afford a strong evidence of his religious character. Secular studies, however congenial to a person's taste, or necessary for his recreation, cannot possibly be the *chief object* of any Minister, who is conscientiously devoted to his pastoral engagements.'¹ These remarks place the subject in a just light. The usefulness of these studies entirely depends upon their subordination to the main purpose. Holding the principal place, they would tend to secularize our spirits, to engross our time, and to divert our attention from a primary regard to the state of our people, who always need our superintendance, and in the lack of this service are in danger of perishing in ignorance and sin. The "vows of God" (as Mr. Scott reminds us) "are upon us." All our reading ought to be subservient to the immediate object of instruction. We may read any book, ancient or modern, sacred or profane, infidel, heretical, or what not; *but always as Ministers*, to note such things, as may the better enable us to defend and plead for the "truth as it is in Jesus;" never merely for amusement or curiosity, or love of learning, simply for its own sake, or for the credit or advantages derived from it.'²

¹ Wilks's Essay on Signs of Conversion or Unconversion in Christian Ministers, p. 45.

² Scott's Letters and Papers, pp. 309, 310. 'I carried along with me' (said the excellent Sir M. Hale) 'in all my studies this great design; namely, of improving them and the knowledge acquired by them for the honour of God's name, and the greater discovery of his wisdom, power, and truth; and so translated my secular learning into an improvement of Divine knowledge. And

No one attains remarkable eminence or success, without a resolute and habitual self-denial in subordinating every secondary point to the favourite object. Perhaps the highest praise for a Minister of the Gospel was given by Dr. Johnson, in his life of Dr. Watts, when he remarked of the subject of his biography, that, 'whatever he took in hand, was, by his incessant solicitude for souls, converted to theology.' And indeed this determined singleness of purpose is indispensable to a conscientious discharge of Ministerial obligations. How fearful would be the responsibility of a soul passing into eternity unregarded and uninstructed, while our minds were engaged in some pursuit of literature, taste, accomplishment, or even abstract theology! How self-convicting would be the confession—"While thy servant was busy here and there, the man was gone."¹ It is always dangerous to prefer the indulgence of study to the active exercises of the Ministry; or at least to 'give ourselves to reading,' so as to neglect the work of pastoral instruction.²

had I not practised this design in my acquests of human learning, I had concluded my time mis-spent: because I ever thought it unworthy of a man that had an everlasting soul, to furnish it only with such learning, as either would die with his body, and so become unuseful for his everlasting state, or that in the next moment after death would be attained, without labour or toil in this life.' Judge Hale's account of the Good Steward. Many of us might profitably sit at the feet of this distinguished Christian layman.

¹ See 1 Kings xx. 40.

² 'The divine, who spends all his time in study and contemplation on objects ever so sublime and glorious, while his people are left uninstructed, acts the same part the eagle would do, that should sit all day staring at the sun, while her young ones were starving in the nest.' Bishop Horne's Essays, p. 71. 'Can any thing be more opposed' (asks an eloquent Minister of his brethren) 'to the simple character of an herald of Christ, than a mere taste for elegant literature, the mere labour of a scientific student, the mere ardour of the philosopher or the historian? Was it for this you undertook the cure of souls? Is it for this you desert your closet, your sick chambers, your private devotional duties? A literary spirit in a Minister of Christ is direct rebellion against the

Many such avocations are legitimate in their character, but criminal in their over-indulgence. An engrossing attachment, preventing an entire self-devotedness of heart, though less scandalous, may prove eventually little less prejudicial to our Ministry, than the love of money or of pleasure in its most palpable forms. And therefore ‘as to the waters which are drawn from these springs, how sweetly soever they may taste to the curious mind, that thirsts for the applause which they sometimes procure; I fear there is often reason to pour them before the Lord with rivers of penitential tears, as the blood of souls, which have been forgotten, while these trifles have been remembered and preserved.’¹ Such (as we have already remarked) was the godly jealousy of Henry Martyn’s spirit; fearing, lest in the midst of his literary and theological studies his soul should be deadened to his more spiritual avocations.² There is obviously much that might legitimately engage our interest in an ordinary Christian course, which the solemn dedication of the Ordination vow impels us, if not to put away, at least to restrain within very contracted limits, under the conviction, (to use again the forcible words of Doddridge, who on this subject cannot be suspected of prejudice,) that ‘many things employ a very large portion of our retired time, and are studied rather as polite amusements to our own mind, than as things which seem to have an apparent subserviency to the glory of God, and the edification of our flock; and consequently, I fear they will stand as *articles of abatement* (if I may so express it) in our final account; and, when they come to be first claims of his high office.’ Wilson’s Prefatory Essay to Baxter, p. 55.

¹ Doddridge’s Sermon on the neglect of souls. Works, vol. iii. 248. The sermon is also given in ‘Williams’s Christian Preacher.’

² Note, pp. 66, 67.

made manifest, will be found “works that shall be burnt,” as being no better in the divine esteem than “wood, hay, or stubble,” (1 Cor. iii. 12, 15.) how beautifully soever they may have been garnished or gilded over.”¹ There can be no better prospect of fruitfulness to our Ministry, than with the heavenly view of Leighton to ‘*count the whole world in comparison with the cross of Christ one grand impertinence;*’ and to be brought to the mind of Professor Frank at the period of his conversion—‘Whereas I had but too much idolized learning, I now perceive, that all attainments at the feet of Gamaliel are to be valued like dung, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.’²

Christian self-denial must also be extended to *clerical amusements and recreations*. How worthy of imitation, as well as of admiration, is the principle, that led Mr. Cecil to cut the strings of his violin, and to throw aside his painting-brush, when he detected the interests of his mind diverted from present duty by the impulse of taste and accomplishments! ‘Let the Ministry’ (as Mr. Scott exhorts us) ‘have our *whole time*. Let even recreation and animal refresh-

¹ Doddridge’s Sermon, *ut supra*. Compare also his Family Expositor—Note on 1 Cor. iii. 15, and some important hints especially addressed to young Ministers, in his Observations on the Childhood of the Saviour—On Luke ii. Sect. xiv.

² Preface to Professor Frank’s ‘Christ the Sum and Substance of Holy Scripture.’ p. xvii. ‘We are to pursue our principal study at the feet of Jesus Christ. The Son of God declared to the world what he had received from his Father; and his Ministers are to teach the faithful what they have first learned from the Son of God. The Apostle professes himself to “know nothing, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” And, indeed, he who knows this truth well, knows all others; and he arrives at this knowledge in a degree proportionable to his own needs, and those of the church, who studies with a crucified spirit.’ Pastoral Instructions to his Clergy, by Anthony Godeau, Bishop of Grasse and Vence, translated from the French, 1703.

ment, be so regulated, moderated, and subordinated, that they may not interfere with our grand employment, or unfit us for it; but rather recruit and prepare us for it, that they may all become subservient to our main object.'¹ Neither mind nor body, indeed, can be preserved in health without moderate relaxation of the system. But what spiritual self-observer does not feel the need for incessant watchfulness, lest the influence of the love of ease and pleasure should abate the relish for heavenly employments, and consume in vanity or idleness those days and hours, which ought to have been industriously devoted to our high and responsible obligations? It is no breach of charity to suppose, that some cases will be found among us, to whom Massillon would have spoken, as he did to his own clergy—'What is the most unreasonable, is, that the clergy, who plead the necessity of amusements, are ordinarily those who have the least need of them, who most neglect their duty, and the employment attached to their vocation. Their life consists in an habitual indolence. We see in them nothing serious, not even the discharge of their professional obligations, which are often hurried over with an air of fatigue, of reluctance, and of indecency. What ought to be their consolation is their trouble. They hasten into the world, where they may forget their profession and themselves together.'² There can be no difficulty in admitting the truth of Archbishop Secker's remark—'Not all things that are lawful are expedient; and certainly these things,' (speaking of worldly amusements,) 'further than they are in themselves requisite for health of body and refreshment of mind, or some really valuable purpose, are all a misemployment of our leisure hours,

¹ Scott's Letters and Papers, p. 309.

² Charges, p. 142.

which we ought to set our people a pattern of filling up well. A Minister of God's word, *attentive to his duty, will neither have leisure for such dissipations, public or domestic, nor liking to them.*¹

And may not this view of the subject apply to Clerical attendance upon oratorios,² musical festivals, and exhibitions of a similar character, which are not so decidedly "according to the course of this world," as to preclude a difference of opinion among us? Does not the principle of self-denial mark the strait line of the Christian path? If our worldly parishioners, who hear our remonstrances against the pursuit of the vanities of the world, should express surprise or pleasure at meeting us at such places of resort, ought not our consciences to whisper a wholesome doubt respecting *the expediency*³ (to say the least) of our attendance? Much more, according to the rule just referred to, if our presence should give pain to a tender, or indeed, (as in the case alluded to by the apostle) a *scrupulous conscience*,⁴ ought we to repeat our attendance? Such a restraint would not necessarily imply the unlawful character of our indulgence; yet the neglect of the exercise of this spirit of Christian forbearance is not less a "sin against Christ" than against our "weak brethren."⁵ In doubtful cases Christian love and self-denial dictate the safe and the best path. The

¹ Charges, p. 238.

² The writer begs to refer to some letters from the pen of a most enthusiastic lover of music, written under the influence of that Christian self-denial, which enabled him to subjugate his most favourite pursuits to the designs of his office. Life of Rev. Legh Richmond, pp. 397—404.

³ Comp. 1 Cor. vi. 12.

⁴ Comp. Ib. viii. 10.

⁵ Ib. 12. This point is argued with considerable force by Professor Campbell, Lecture iii. on the Pastoral Character, and by Archbishop Secker; Sermons, vol. iii. A respectable body of Christians (the Society of Friends) find it easy to deny themselves recreations of this kind. Has then a Minister of the Gospel,

exercise of restraint in the present instance would be the natural and direct expression of "love to the brethren." It would save us from the *possible hazard* of becoming stones of stumbling to those, whom we ought to guide in the way of the cross. As an act of violence to our own inclination, at the supposed call of duty, it would be in the true spirit of our Divine Master's injunction—"Deny thyself:"¹ and an exemplification of the Christian rule—"Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use *not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*"² Upon this principle clergymen have been led to relinquish the amusement of shooting. If it be argued, that no moral evil can be attached to this recreation, yet surely it does not exhibit the Christian Minister in his proper Levitical habits. Would not the transition be deemed somewhat violent, to visit the sick and dying in the way home from shooting? Could we—leaving the dog and gun at the threshold—expect to realize in the sick chamber the nearness of eternity in its unspeakable horrors, or its everlasting joys? Would not a shooting dress rather repel than invite a tempted conscience, seeking for spiritual counsel at our mouth; or an awakened soul, anxious for an answer to the infinitely momentous question—"What must I do to be saved?" These circumstances of our holy employment—which seem peculiarly to call for an unction from above, or to suppose an habitual frame of spiritual aspiration—carry to the mind so manifest

whose character should embody the principles of self-denial, any right to complain of these restrictions, which many tender as well as scrupulous consciences deem necessary to maintain the separate and consecrated sanctity of our official character? How paltry after all is this sacrifice, compared with the worldling's daily exercise of self-denial—"raising up early, sitting up late, to eat the bread of sorrows;" in pursuit of a shadow—a bubble—a nothing!

¹ Matt. xvi. 24.

² Gal. v. 13.

an incongruity with such a recreation, that it is difficult to place its abandonment upon any less ground than of positive duty.

It may be asked—What virtue is there in abstaining from things indifferent? Why, if convinced of their innocence, may we not act according to our own convictions, rather than according to the superstitions of others? But “no man”—especially no Minister—“liveth to himself?”¹ The “strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, not to please themselves.”² Will not an honest self-scrutiny detect a criminal fondness for pleasure, as the principle of indulgence? For what other principle could allow the habit of self-gratification at so serious a cost to the interests of others? To affect, by our conduct, to despise what appears to us weakness, scrupulosity, or prejudice, is the way rather to confirm the evil than to cure it; while the sacredness of the Ministerial standard is lowered, with equal injury to ourselves, and to the dignity and fruitfulness of our work.

The sum of what the Writer has ventured to offer for the consideration of his brethren on this subject is simply this—Whatever experience has proved to chill our fervour, to dissipate our mind, to divert our attention, or to occupy a large portion of time or interest, is the “right eye,” that we are called to “pluck out and cast from us.”³ Farming—as an amusement or or business—(from its necessary entanglement with worldly anxieties) seems wholly inconsistent.⁴ Gar-

¹ Rom. xiv. 7.

² Ib. xv. 1.

³ Matt. v. 29. ‘He that is appointed to minister in holy things must not suffer secular affairs, or sordid arts, to eat up a great portion of his employment. It was a great idleness in Theophylact, the patriarch of Constantinople, to spend his time in his stable of horses, when he should have been in his study, or in his pulpit, or saying his holy offices.’ Bishop Taylor.

⁴ See 2 Tim. ii. 4.

dening, accomplishments, literature, and even *theology* itself—except as it is made a *spiritual study*—must be “kept under, and brought into subjection” to the main design. Far be it from the Writer to advocate any tone of ascetic austerity. He would not render the bow useless by keeping it always bent. He would not forget that we are men as well as ministers, servants and not slaves. But do we not warn our people, that the love of any created object, predominant above our Saviour’s claims to supreme affection, ruins their hopes of salvation for eternity? And ought not we to remind ourselves, that the attraction of mind to any one subject of interest, diverting our minds from our consecrated employment, involves it in the positive guilt of unfaithfulness to our Master, must bring a curse instead of a blessing upon our Ministry, and may well lead us to tremble for our ultimate safety? Let the heart be habitually in the work, and it will be found in a great measure to furnish its own relaxation, and sufficient variety for renewed refreshment in the midst of its more painful exercises. For whatever else may be needed, an ample range is left for well-disciplined and Christian enjoyment; which tends to strengthen rather than to enervate the love of the spiritual character.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPIRIT OF COVETOUSNESS.

COVETOUSNESS in Ministers has almost grown to a proverb. Judas is an awful example of its consistency with the highest Ministerial gifts. It is not the fault of any Ecclesiastical system, but the natural principle of a corrupt and selfish heart. It readily appended

itself to Popery from the transfer of the aggrandizing spirit of the system to individuals. But Judas and Demas had been its victims long before "the Man of sin" sprang up in the church. It has attached itself to Protestant establishments, in the higher departments, from the influx of wealth arising from their alliance with the temporal power; and, in the lower departments, from the want of sufficient means to meet the present demands and future exigencies of their situation. In this latter view especially, it allies itself to every system of Protestant dissent, with an influence as habitual and destructive, as in any established systems in the Christian church.

The frequent scriptural connexions of this selfish principle with the sacred office,¹ were probably intended to warn the servant of God of a most prevalent temptation. Our Church, without any express mention, has pointedly alluded to it in each of her Ordination services. She warns her deacons from the word of God, that they be "not greedy of filthy lucre." She exhibits to her priests the awful picture of "an hireling;"² at the same time instructing them "how they ought to forsake and set aside (as much as they may) *all worldly cares* and studies;" and questioning them again more closely, upon their diligence and readiness in "laying aside the study *of the world*

¹ The description of the Jewish teachers, Isaiah lvi. 11. Jer. vi. 13. Ezekiel xxxiv. 1—3. Micah iii. 11. Matt. xv. 5, 6. xxiii. 14—the Apostle's contrast of Timothy with the teachers in the Christian Church, (Phil. ii. 20, 21.) the frequent warnings of Ministers against "filthy lucre"—1 Tim. iii. 3, 8. vi. 9—11. Tit. i. 7. 1 Pet. v. 2. illustrate this point. Compare also 2 Pet. ii. 3. Jude 11.

² 'Hireling not one, who performs the office or duty of a Minister for hire or reward, (for the Apostle, or rather our blessed Lord himself says—The labourer is worthy of his hire, or reward, 1 Tim. v. 18. Luke x. 7.) but one who endeavours to make a gain of godliness,' &c. Brewster, quoted in Bishop Mant's Prayer Book.

and the flesh." She deems it necessary to give to her highest order of ministers this solemn charge—"Be to the flock of Christ, a *shepherd, not a wolf; feed them; devour them not.*"¹ It was a blot upon the celebrated heathen moralist,² that, while he declaimed with vehemence against covetousness, he was, throughout his life, a slave to the base traffic of usury. And how discreditable is earnest preaching against the influence of covetousness, if our personal habits, or family appurtenances, should exhibit its pollution! When we warn our people against "the love of money, as the root of all evil,"³ they will look into our own garden for this destructive weed, which may possibly be growing there, even while we are seeking to root it out of every garden in our parish.

Covetousness is very distinct from frugality, which is a real duty—implying a well-directed and very moderate use of the things of this life—"owing no man any thing"—"using the world as not abusing it"—like a good steward, making such provision for our families, as will answer the present necessity, and prevent them from becoming burdensome to the church. This, with contentment upon Evangelical principles, forms a right Christian character. But

¹ See the Ordination and Consecration Services. 'Colligimus, neminem probum verbi Ministrum, quin non idem sit pecuniæ contemptor.' Calv. in Acts xx. 33. 'The moment a strong and governing desire of accumulating property takes possession of a Minister's mind—preach with orthodoxy, and some degree of animation, he may—visit his parishioners to a certain extent, he may; but a devoted labourer in the vineyard, who has one object in view—the extension and glory of his Master's kingdom—and who makes all his pursuits subservient to that object, he will not be. It is just as impossible for a man to be a great accumulator of property, and at the same time a faithful devoted Minister of Christ, as it is to establish a fellowship between light and darkness, Christ and Belial.' Professor Miller's Letters, pp. 433, 434.

² Seneca.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 10.

covetousness is an inordinate thought of, desire after, and employment in, the care of this world. The palpable exhibition of this principle is seen in a *habit of saving*—or a watching too closely over what we have, and a rooted unwillingness to part with it. This is too often connected with a want of consideration and sympathy for the calls of distress, and enlarged consecration of our substance to the extension of our Redeemer's kingdom. We cannot but be concerned, in casting our eyes over the Reports of our Religious Societies to mark the average of subscriptions from those, whose capabilities are so widely disproportionate. This may arise in many instances, from the great variety of channels, amongst which our benevolent fund is distributed ; but are there no cases, where it originates in a want of economy, in self-indulgence, or covetousness ?

Specious forms of this principle often belong to those who are highly connected in the world ; and though the individuals themselves may be unconscious of injury, yet it is too often exhibited to intelligent Christians in a lowered standard of separation from the world, in an unspiritual cast of mind, walk, and conversation, and in a want of Divine power and refreshment upon their Ministrations. In Mr. Cadogan of Reading, the dignity of the Ministerial character rose superior to the adventitious circumstances of elevated rank, without any degradation of his personal claim to respect ; and the spirit of simplicity and holiness, maintained throughout his Ministration, was honoured with peculiar tokens of his Master's approbation.¹

¹ Massillon has a remarkable sermon on the temptation of Christ, which he transfers to the temptations of the Ministry. It is hoped that the instruction (unsuitable indeed to the gravity of the pulpit) will not be rejected on account of the eccentric form of deduction in which it is given. I. A scheme to live like gentlemen—" Com-

In the more ordinary walks of the Ministry we may mark the hateful workings of covetousness—in a mean attention to small matters—in the motives that influence our plans of economy—in carefulness to maintain present appearances—in contrivances to shift off expences upon others—in the natural excitement of pleasure—in the prospect of gain—in an undue depression from the loss of it—in the natural current of our thoughts in the direction of the world—in the readiness in lesser matters to put it upon a level with religion. All or any of these actings of this detestable principle must issue in a feeling of coldness, hesitation, or disgust in the exercises of religion.

The same principle may be seen in a rigorous enforcement of ecclesiastical claims—a litigious and unconciliating spirit, ending in a fatal loss of Ministerial influence. Without any fair ground for the imputation of injustice or extortion,—there may be a want of tenderness and recollection of the main ends of the Ministry, and of the sole purpose, for which a maintenance is secured to us.¹ Whatever consideration

mand these stones to be made bread.” This danger belongs to the first entrance on the Ministry. II. Presumption to aspire after preferment—“He set him on a pinnacle of the temple.” This belongs to an aspiring Minister: the second degree. III. A boundless desire of riches and honour in elevated stations, by which a man is induced to submit to abject services for the sake of elevation—“All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

¹ Mr. Grimshaw is said to have been ‘not rigorous in his exacting his dues, but contented with what his parishioners brought him. He would say to them—‘I will not deserve your curses when I am dead for what I have received for my poor labour among you. I want no more of you than your souls for my God, and a bare maintenance for myself.’ Newton’s Life of Grimshaw, p. 124. If he carried this principle beyond its legitimate bounds, yet the spirit of it is admirable. The truth of Archbishop Secker’s remark will be generally admitted—‘A due measure of disinterestedness is *one main requisite* for the success of a Clergyman’s labours.’ Charges, p. 248. “*I seek not your’s but you.*” 2 Cor. xii. 13, 14. See Scott on 1 Cor. ix. 13—18.

may be due to the claims of our family, the obligations of our spiritual Ministry must maintain their ascendancy.¹ In prospectively regarding also the right of our successors, Bishop Taylor's wholesome caution may be kept in mind—"Let not the *name of the Church be made a pretence for personal covetousness*, by saying, you are willing to remit many things, but you must not wrong the Church; for though it be true, that you are not to do prejudice to successors, yet many things may be forgiven upon just occasions, from which the Church shall receive no incommmodity; but be sure, that there are but few things, which thou art bound to do in thy personal capacity, but *the same also, and much more*, thou art obliged to perform as thou art a public person."² Even a heathen has remarked, that 'there is no more plain sign of a narrow and little mind, than the love of riches'³ And what need is there to exercise a constant guard against those inclinations and occasions of temptations, that feed the power of this subtle principle! How hard is it habitually to maintain a practical belief of the Scriptural declaration of the fearful influence of riches upon our spiritual interests, and, *by consequence*, upon our Ministry.—

¹ The following memorandum of Bishop Wilson, for the use of his children, is in the most elevated spirit of primitive disinterestedness—"If I do not live to tell you, why I have saved no more for you out of my bishopric, let this satisfy you—that the less you have of goods gathered from the church, the better the rest that I leave you will prosper. Church livings were never designed to make families, or to raise portions out of them, but to maintain our families, to keep up hospitality, to feed the poor, &c.; and one day you will be glad that this was my settled opinion, and God grant, that I may act accordingly." Stowell's Life, pp. 58, 59.

² Bishop Taylor's Advice to his Clergy. It may be found in Bishop Randolph's Enchiridion Theologicon, vol. i. or in the Clergyman's Instructor.

³ Nihil est tam angusti tamque parvi animi, quam amare divitias. Cic. de Officiis. Lib. i.

“Thou, O man of God,” (is the fatherly counsel to a young Minister) “*flee these things.*”¹ In the return of Apostolical simplicity, self-denial and love, we may anticipate a Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit upon our Ministrations.

Covetousness is a far more specious principle than worldly conformity. It has much to plead under the cover of necessity, justice, prudence, and œconomy. Yet under all its deceptive garbs its real character is detected. Is not the straitness of means often an excuse from the exercise of Christian charity, while little or no restraint is laid upon the expensiveness of the dress, the table, furniture, or mode of living? Is not the charitable fund sometimes, in seasons of depression, the first that is curtailed? And do we not continue to “dwell” as before “in cieled houses, while the house of God lies waste?”²

Self-denial in the œconomy of the family must also exercise a wholesome restraint on this selfish principle. The pupillizing system, (when engaged in principally for keeping up appearances, or the worldly advantage of children,) and the adoption of worldly maxims in the education and disposal of our families, (which Mr. Scott considered to ‘constitute a considerable part of the *sins of the Church* in the present day’) come under this animadversion. It is also but too plain, that the families of Clergymen are sometimes brought up to worldly expectations, rather than as disciples of the cross, and citizens of heaven. Too much weight can scarcely be given to Mr. Scott’s inestimable instructions on this subject, embodied as they were as the practical principles of his domestic system, and honoured with the most successful issue.

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 11.

² Compare Hag. i. 4.

‘We are to live’ (he remarked) ‘at the altar; but a living, a bare decent maintenance, *without any avaricious or ambitious views of advancing ourselves or our families*, should content us.’ It was upon this principle (his son informs us) ‘he acted through life—not that he in any way reflected upon Clergymen who were born to wealth, or on whom Providence otherwise conferred it, if only they made a proper use of it. *Aspiring after it* was what he condemned.’ His favourite maxim was—‘what is best for the soul is really best for us,’ and ‘he ever looked upon worldly possessions with a jealous eye, *for his family* as well as for himself.’—‘The grand secret of his success,’ (that which gave him, as he tells us, the most satisfaction in the retrospect at the close of his life), appears to have been this—‘that I always “sought” *for my children as well as for myself*, “in the first place, the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”’ ‘This view’—his son observes—‘would extend to the value, practically and evidently set upon eternal in preference to temporal things; and very particularly to the disposal of his children in life, the places of instruction to which they should be sent, the families they should visit, the connexions which they should form, and the openings which should be embraced or rejected for them.’¹

Covetousness in all its varied forms is more easily detected in a Minister than in private Christians. The sources of his clerical income, being drawn from

¹ Scott’s Life, pp. 591, 611—614. Compare, pp. 91, 396—398. Works, pp. 225, 226.’ Luther’s dying prayer breathes the spirit of a man, who had trampled the world under his feet—‘Domine Deus, gratias ago tibi, quod volueris me esse pauperem super terram, et mendicum. Non habeo domum, agrum, possessiones, pecuniam, quæ relinquam. Tu dedisti mihi uxorem et filios, Tibi reddo. Nutri, doce, serva—ut hactenus me—O Pater pædagogum, et iudex viduarum.’ Adam in Vita Lutheri.

his people, are generally known; and consequently its capabilities and disposal are matters of public animadversion. Besides, "as a city set upon a hill, he cannot be hid."¹ The marks of this principle upon the appearance of his household are "known and read of all men." The great Apostle could call his God to witness, that in his Thessalonian ministry he had "never at any time used a cloke of covetousness;"² and doubtless this practical exposition of the heavenly character of his exhortations was one of the grand main-springs of his Ministerial success. On the other hand there is no more fatal hinderance to the Ministry, none that makes our person and labours more contemptible in the eyes of the world, than this idolatrous principle. Its indulgence is in direct opposition to the design of our office, which is to draw men from earth to heaven. It operates unfavourably upon many sources of Ministerial usefulness—such as simple devotedness to the work, charity and hospitality, according to the extent of our means. It besots and enchains the mind under the influence of a most corroding passion, which hinders the spiritual elevation of the soul, and defiles the consecrated character of our work.³ George Herbert's primitive Parson, therefore,

¹ Matt. v. 14. ² 1 Thess. ii. 5. Compare also Acts xx. 33—35.

³ Comp. Gregory de Curâ Past. Part i. ch. xi. Mr. Scott states the impression on his own mind on perusing the memoirs of Luther and Melancthon, of the disinterested spirit common to most of the eminent men, employed in the great work of the Reformation. His own applicatory remarks are well deserving of attention—"Yes, and if we would aspire to be employed with success on such high and holy services, we must become detached more than we are from the interests of this life. Oh! are we not become... too much given to contrive the means of a good provision, and of maintaining a handsome style of living? This was never the spirit, which wrought great things in the Church of God. Let us beware, lest we fall under the sentence, though in a somewhat varied sense—"Ye have your reward"—in improved circumstances, but in blighted labours." Continuation of Milner, vol. ii. pp. 181, 182.

‘labours most in those things, which are most apt to scandalize his parish. He is very circumspect in avoiding all covetousness; neither being greedy to get, nor niggardly to keep, nor troubled to lose, any worldly wealth; but in his words and actions slighting and disesteeming it; even to a wondering, that the world should so much value wealth, which in the day of wrath hath not one drachm of comfort for us.’¹

The most effectual preventions to the operation of this principle are to have but few wants; to learn from our poor Christian day-labourers to cultivate faith for the future, to live not for men or for time, but for eternity—to have the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures permanently in view—to study our Master’s life and example—to exercise ourselves in that habitual eyeing of the cross, which will produce a gradual conformity to its spirit—and to remember, as Ministers, that ‘an earnest desire to gain continually more souls to God is the sole avarice permitted to a pastor.’²

The closeness and accuracy of observation of the heathen on this point is very remarkable. Nothing wins the way for the Christian missionary with them more than a disinterested spirit. They consider freedom from the love or care of money the strongest mark of the influence of Christianity. It was remarked by one of the most intelligent among them, of a native Christian teacher, lately deceased—‘There was only one flaw he discerned—in every thing else he was perfectly brought under the power of the gospel—he was not covetous: but he had a degree of reluctance in parting with his money.’

¹ Herbert’s Country Parson, chap. iii.

² Quesnel on Tit. i. 7. The subject of this Chapter suggests the notice of the opposite spirit of *improvidence*. Distressing embarrassments have often arisen, from imprudent marriages, from wasteful wives, or from personal habits of negligence; by which Ministers have been degraded before their people, in the loss of their respectability, the true dignity and independence of their office, and their usefulness in the church. Whether these difficulties were incurred without rational prospect of deliverance; or whether charitable assistance was contemplated, as opening a way of escape; the motive is most unworthy of the high disinter-

CHAPTER VI.

NEGLECT OF RETIREMENT.

IN the midst of the incessant, pressing, and active avocations of the Christian Ministry, it is well to recollect the considerate and seasonable advice of our Divine Master—“*Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.*”¹ The spirit of prayer cannot breathe freely in the atmosphere of constant and exciting employment. Not that we would seek retirement, like the contemplative monk, for the purposes of abstraction; but to recruit our spiritual energies for renewed exercises of self-denial and perseverance. Macknight’s opinion is highly probable, that St. Paul’s journey to Arabia immediately subsequent to his conversion (of which no mention is made in the inspired record of his Ministerial travels) was not to exercise

stedness of our heavenly calling. Poverty, after the example of Christ and his apostles, can never be a disgrace; but liberality and wastefulness with the resources of others (attended too often with crooked devices for our own personal interests), must bring the Ministry into contempt. The strict economy which the Ministerial income often demands, is a Providential appointment; nor can we overstep the bounds, (except perhaps under peculiar dispensations) without equal discredit to ourselves and to our office. The aggravation of the evil is, that the embarrassments often arise not from actual necessity, but from needless expenditure. And therefore while we would deprecate the pitiful savings of meanness, we would seriously recommend a wise economy in maintaining the strict balance between our resources and our wants; and a liberal spirit, within the bounds of those resources, to be attained by habits of plainness, simplicity, and self-denial—duties of the highest importance for the exhibition of the elevated standard and separate walk of the Minister of Christ. Perhaps indeed, self-denial in our own indulgences, liberality to our friends, largeness of heart and sympathy with the poor—and consecration of all to the service of God—would fully exhibit the high spirit of the Christian Ministry.

¹ Mark vi. 31.

his Ministry, but to 'receive further revelations.' Secret prayer and meditation were doubtless the channels of Divine revelation to his soul; while the more accurate and undisturbed study of his own heart, combined with prospective calculations of the fearful cost before him, probably occupied most profitably the interval of comparative privacy.¹ The spirit of Brainerd's advice to a young candidate for the Ministry was in his own holy character—'The way' (said he) 'to enjoy the Divine presence, and be fitted for distinguishing service for God, is to live a life of *great devotion and constant self-dedication* to him: observing the motives and dispositions of our own hearts, whence we may learn the corruptions that lodge there, and our constant need of help from God for the performance of the least duty: and, oh! dear sir, let me beseech you frequently to attend to the precious duties of secret fasting and prayer.'² The few amongst us, who are *necessarily* public men, deserve the sympathy and prayers of the church. If

¹ Macknight on Gal. i. 17. Mr. Fletcher, when regret was expressed at his limited sphere, upon his first entrance into the Ministry, remarked with his characteristic piety—'If God does not call me to so much public duty, *I have the more time for study, prayer and praise.*' Cox's Life of Fletcher, p. 24. Compare also Quesnel on Gal. i. 17—19—'The primitive Bishops had places of retirement near their cities, that they might separate themselves from the world; lest, teaching others, they should neglect themselves; lest they should lose the spirit of piety themselves, while they were endeavouring to fix it in others.' Bp. Wilson's *Sacra Privata*. Indeed this appears to be the ordinary course of Ministerial preparation. Moses in Midian—(Exod. ii. 15. iii. 1.) John the Baptist in the desert, (Luke i. 80. iii. 2.)—Jesus in Nazareth, (Matt. ii. 23.) were trained in retirement for their public work.

² Letter ix. appended to his Life. 'How great is the difference' (observes Quesnel) 'between a preacher formed gradually by the hand of God in retirement, fasting, and prayer; and those ordained in haste, who have no other school but the world, no other masters but themselves, and no other preparation than human studies, interrupted by worldly conversations, diversions!' &c. On Luke iii. 2.

their habits of life were not very clearly appointed for them in their Master's work, their peculiar temptations (as we trust) sensibly felt, and their watchfulness and simplicity of faith habitually exercised; their own souls must suffer loss, whatever advantage might accrue to the church through their disinterested labours. Probably a strict adherence to Eliot's quaint but excellent rule to his young students, is of great service to them—'I pray you look to it, that you be early birds:' meaning, we conclude, not merely early risers, but early Christian students, and above all, early worshippers.

The cultivation of habits of retirement is of the highest consideration. Popular engagements must not be suffered to interfere with a regard to our own personal interests, or Ministerial store. An experienced father, with a well-furnished mind, and intellectual habits, can afford to make sacrifices of time for the public cause, which would cost a young Minister the hazard of his permanent usefulness. *He* must at all events secure for himself necessary time for Biblical attainments; else will his course of instruction be inefficient for the grand purposes of his office. The habit, which Dr. Paley recommended to the younger Clergy, 'as the foundation of almost all good ones, *was retirement*. Learn' (said he) 'to live alone. Half your faults originate from the want of this faculty. It is impatience of solitude, which carries you continually from your parishes, your home, your duty, makes you foremost in every party of pleasure and place of diversion, dissipates your thoughts, distracts your studies, leads you into expense, keeps you in distress, or puts you out of humour with your profession.'¹ And indeed it is not

¹ Advice to the younger Clergy of Carlisle.

easy to say, how much the happiness of the Minister's life, and the effectiveness of his work, depend upon a judicious combination of retired habits of study with public or social exercises.

But far more important is the course of retirement for the Minister's spiritual communion with his God. And here it is to be feared, that Luther's custom to give his three best hours of the day to this purpose, and Bradford studying on his knees, are more often alluded to than followed. Yet the diligent pastor will feel the importance, both to himself and to his people, of living in his study as well as in his parish; not only for the necessary digestion of the subject matter of his Ministrations, but most chiefly for the cultivation of a nearer approach and a more habitual access to God.¹ How delightful would it be to us, and how edifying to our people, to bring forth that Scripture as food to their souls, which the teaching of the Spirit of God hath opened to our own hearts in prayer!² Truths that are thus obtained and wrought out in prayer have a peculiar unction.—“Waiting on the Lord” will never be an encouragement to indolence. In the habit of it, the weakest Minis-

¹ Bishop Burnet's advice on this subject is truly episcopal—‘To give the studies of the clergy their full effect; a priest that is much in his study ought to employ a great part of his time in secret and fervent prayer, for the direction and blessing of God in his labours, for the constant assistance of his Holy Spirit, and for a lively sense of Divine matters, that so he may feel the impressions of them grow deep and strong upon his thoughts. *This, and this only, will make him go on with his work, without wearying, and be always rejoicing in it. This will make his expressions of these things to be happy and noble, when he can bring them out of the good treasure of his heart, that is ever full, and always warm with them.* Pastoral Care, chap. viii.

² Thus Cyprian speaks of his own Ministry—‘Non solum proferimus verba, quæ de Scripturarum sacris fontibus veniunt, sed cum ipsis verbis preces et Dominum et vota sociamus.’ De bono pudicitia.

trations will be efficient—in the neglect of it the most powerful will be paralyzed. Indeed, ‘the spirit of our Ministry’ (as Massillon admirably observes) ‘is a spirit of prayer. Prayer is the ornament of the priesthood, the leading feature of our character.—Without prayer, a Minister is of no use to the church, nor of any advantage to mankind. He sows; and God gives no increase. He preaches; and his words are only like “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” He recites the praises of God; while “his heart is far from him.” It is prayer alone then, that gives the whole strength and efficacy to our different administrations: and that man ceases, if I may use the expression, to be a public Minister from the time he ceases to pray. It is prayer which supplies him with consolation in all his labours; and he celebrates the ordinances of religion, as the hireling performs his work—he considers them as a heavy task, or a severe imposition, if prayer doth not assuage its troubles, or console him for want of success.’¹ If Solomon felt his need of supplication for heavenly wisdom to discriminate the different characters of his great people, and to devise and execute the best-conducted measures for their prosperity, do not we “go out and come in” before our people with far deeper responsibilities, and yet with the ignorance of “a little child” to “discern between good and bad,”

¹ Charges, pp. 24. 25. In the same impressive language he addresses his Clergy in another place—‘My brethren—a pastor who does not pray, who does not love prayer, does not belong to that Church, which “prays without ceasing;” he is a dry and barren tree, which cumpers the Lord’s ground; he is the enemy, and not the father of his people; he is a stranger, who has usurped the pastor’s place, and to whom the salvation of the flock is indifferent. Wherefore, my brethren, be faithful to prayer, and your functions will be more useful, your people more holy, your labours will prove much sweeter, and the Church’s evils will diminish.’ Disc. Synod.

if uninstructed with heavenly wisdom? The most eminent Minister will be most ready to cry out—
 “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart.”¹
 For of how little avail are the most splendid talents, the most mighty eloquence, and the most devoted diligence, except the unction be brought down from heaven by frequent and fervent supplication!

Prayer therefore is one half of our Ministry;² and it gives to the other half all its power and success. It is the *appointed medium of receiving spiritual communications for the instruction of our people*.—Those who walk most closely with God are most spiritually intelligent in “the secret of his covenant.”³ Many can set their seal to Luther’s testimony, that he often obtained more knowledge in a short time by prayer, than by many hours of laborious and accurate study. It will also *strengthen the habitual engagedness of our hearts in our work*, and our natural exercises and capacities for it. Living near to the fountain-head of influence, we shall be in the constant receipt of fresh supplies of light, support, and consolation—to assist us in our duties, to enable us for our difficulties, and to assure us of present acceptance, unfailing and seasonable grace, and a suitable measure of ultimate success. The same heavenly resource will furnish us *with fruitful matter for experimental intercourse with our people*—giving us a clear insight into the workings of nature and grace, of sin and holiness; and enduing us with a spiritual ability to counterwork the wiles of Satan and the deceitfulness of sin in their incessant and fatal influence upon immortal souls. Hence also we shall be enabled to *diffuse the spirit of the gospel in the mode of our*

¹ Comp. 1 Kings iii. 7—9.

² Comp. Acts vi. 4.

³ See Psalm xxv. 14. Comp. 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

Ministrations ; adapting them, under the influence of Divine wisdom, to the several cases of our flock—speaking with power to the unawakened—with compassion to the hardened—binding up “the bruised reed”—and “strengthening,” by solemn admonitions and exhortations, “the things that remain” among us “that were ready to die.”¹ Nor is it the least advantage flowing from this habit of prayer, that it enables us to advocate the cause of our people before God, as well as to sympathize with their difficulties, and to lay ourselves out for their instruction, edification, and comfort. It is impossible to tell, how large a portion of the prosperity of the church of Colosse flowed from the constant and laborious fervency of the supplications of Epaphras on their behalf.² Probably these secret labours were as fruitful as his public services; and there can be little doubt, but we shall find that our most successful hours of employment for our people were not those when we were speaking to them from God, but when we were speaking for them to God.³ In this view it is of the utmost importance to associate our own interests with those of our people, and to unite prayer for ourselves with intercession for them. The help we may be able to afford them in their difficulties, trials, and weakness, is intimately connected with the spiritual temperament of our own minds, acquired or maintained through the same organ of heavenly communication, which we recommend for their daily use and encouragement. The success of this operation is so certain, that an

¹ Rev. iii. 2.

² See Col. iv. 12.

³ ‘The kingdom of heaven must suffer violence, and the people will not ordinarily be brought into it without some violence; but let me tell you, it is not so much the violence of the pulpit, that doeth the deed, or the violence of the closet.’ Bp. Sanderson’s Sermon on Rom. xv. 5.

eminent divine has laid it down as a general rule—
 ‘that when we would have any great things to be
 accomplished, the best policy is, to work by an engine
 which the world sees nothing of.’¹ Thus Archbishop
 Secker gave this valuable and encouraging advice to
 his clergy —‘Form yourselves thoroughly by devout
 meditation and fervent prayer to seriousness of heart,
 and zeal for the eternal welfare of souls; *for then
 every thing else that you are to do will follow of
 course.*’² Our blessed Master’s example on this
 point is much to be observed. As man, he had
 most responsible concerns to transact with God.—
 Nothing important was done without prayer. His
 entrance on his Ministry was with prayer.³ His ordi-
 nation of his first Ministers was preceded by a whole
 night of prayer.⁴ After a day spent in works of in-
 struction and mercy, (such as would have included
 a week of our ordinary labour) time was redeemed
 from sleep for this sacred employment.⁵

The most effectual hinderances, therefore, to the
 fruitfulness of our pastoral work are those, which
 impede our personal communion with the Lord. The
 great enemy thus successfully intercepts the supplies
 of spiritual life, so that the work of God within our
 own souls languishes from the want of its accustomed
 and needful support. There is the greater need of
 this heavenly exercise, lest activity in our public
 employment should be considered to atone for neglect
 of private intercourse with God; and thus our pro-
 fession should become a snare to ourselves, and divested

¹ Dr. Preston: formerly Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

² Secker’s Charges, p. 267. ³ Luke iii. 21. ⁴ Ib. vi. 12.

⁵ Mark i. 21—35. Need we point out the pattern of intermingling
 seasons of heavenly communion with active labour? Will not
 a spiritual pastor delight in the shade as well as in the sun-shine,
 and love to be alone with God, while he is most closely engaged
 in his work?

of all spiritual savour to our flock. Henry Martyn had occasion to lament, that ‘want of private devotional reading and shortness of prayer, through incessant sermon-making, had produced much strangeness between God and his own soul.’ And in the review of the first year of his Ministry, ‘he judged, that he had dedicated *too much time to public Ministrations, and too little to private communion with God.*’¹ Mr. Scott gives a most wholesome caution on this point—‘The principle that made the Apostle determine not to “serve tables,” though a good work in itself, should render Ministers in this day very careful not so to give their services, even to the most useful Societies, and to attending the meetings of them, as to *prevent their “giving themselves continually to the word of God and prayer.”*’ A danger at present seems to arise on this side.² The Writer would therefore wish to draw his own mind and his brethren habitually to this recollection, that nothing will enrich or console us in the neglect of intimate communion with God. We must “walk with God” *at any rate*, or our souls will die. Even Christian communion will form an empty substitute for this hallowed intercourse. The command is—“Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door.”³ Shut out not only vanity and the world, but even for a time “the communion of Saints.” The soul may lose its spiritual vigour in any company but that of God—in the best as well as in the worst—in the Church as well as in the world—in the active engagements of the Ministry as well as in secular employments.

It was said of Fletcher by his interesting Biographer, that ‘his deepest and most sensible communications with God *were enjoyed in those hours, when the door*

¹ Martyn’s Life, pp. 60, 62.

² Scott’s Letters and Papers, p. 313.

Matt. vi. 6.

of his closet was shut against human creatures, as well as human cares. His closet was his favourite retirement, to which he constantly retreated, whenever his public labours allowed him a season of leisure. His public labours (astonishing as they were) bore but little proportion to those internal exercises of prayer and supplication, to which he was wholly given in private. The former of necessity were frequently discontinued; but the latter were almost uninterruptedly maintained from hour to hour. He lived in the spirit of prayer.¹ Was not this the secret of the extraordinary power, that rested upon his Ministrations? The out-pouring of this spirit of supplication would revive our work and enlarge our success. We know who hath said—“Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.”²

CHAPTER VII.

THE INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

ONE of the most profound and accurate observers of the heart has remarked, that spiritual pride offers to Satan his main advantage over the Christian.³ And indeed many circumstances (trifling in themselves, but gathering fearful strength from incidental causes) add fuel to the secret flame, and in the destructiveness of the issue leave us to exclaim—“Behold! how great a matter a little fire kindleth.”⁴ A Minister, affectionately devoted to his work, is honoured of God, and acceptable to his flock; some regard him as an

¹ Gilpin's notes on Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul, pp. 50, 51.

² Isaiah xlv. 11.

³ President Edwards' Thoughts on the Revival in New England.

⁴ James iii. 5.

oracle ; and are almost ready, as at Lystra,¹ to “do sacrifice unto him.” What a large share of humility, what unceasing supply of Divine grace, is needed to resist a temptation, that falls in so powerfully with the selfish principle of the natural heart! ‘Great care must be taken, while we are endeavouring to destroy external idols, or those of vice in others, that we do not insensibly substitute ourselves in their place.’² Successful fishermen need especial watchfulness, “lest they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense unto their drag.”³ We must indeed labour and pray unceasingly for enlarged success. We must acknowledge with thankfulness, the measure that has been granted. But let us not forget, that—should a season of remarkable prosperity be granted—it will probably prove an hour of fearful temptation to our souls.

Cotton Mather appears to have been severely exercised on this subject, on his first entrance into the Ministry. We must refer to his life for a most close and detailed self-scrutiny, the substance of which is as follows:—‘Apprehensions of pride—the *sin of young Ministers*—working in my heart, filled me with inexpressible bitterness and confusion before the Lord. I found, that, when I met with enlargement in prayer or preaching, or answered a question readily and suitably, I was apt to applaud myself in my own mind. I affected pre-eminence, above what belonged to my age or worth. I therefore endeavoured to take a view of my pride—as *the very image of the Devil*, contrary to the grace and image of Christ—

¹ Acts xiv. 13.

² Quesnel on Acts xiv. 15. Sæpe sibi de se mens ipsa mentitur, et fingit se de bono opere amare quod non amat, de mundi autem gloria, non amare quod amat. Gregor. de Curâ Pastor.

³ Hab. i. 16.

opportunities. I therefore resolved to carry my pered heart to be cured by Jesus Christ, that ficient Physician—to watch against my pride—ly much the nature and aggravations of it, and xcellency of the contrary grace.'

re is weighty truth in the remark, that spiritual is '*the sin of young Ministers.*' They do not lly learn so soon as Melancthon, the strength d Adam.' The excitement of novelty awakens maintains their energies in considerable power, as they are surrounded with an atmosphere of rity. All this tends to blind their perception e mystery of iniquity" within, and to excite nfidence, until they seem almost to aspire to nership with God in the salvation of souls ; or st conceive, that their services are of high ance in the Divine dispensations. The pride ularity and success is their temptation. *Vox* is their motto. The breath of the multitude r life. "Good report" is therefore a far closer



How few of us could say with Henry Martyn—‘Men frequently admire me, and I am pleased; *but I abhor the pleasure that I feel.*’¹

Selfishness is indeed the peculiar character of this sin. It is, as if we could take no comparative interest in the conversion of sinners through other instrumentality than our own, or—as if we measured our regard to the glory of God by the opportunities afforded for the display of our own glory. We wish for eminence rather than for usefulness. We want to stand alone. Instead of rejoicing in the spiritual acquirements of others, we are reluctant to admire superior talents, even when they are consecrated to the cause of our Great Master. We cannot bear any thing that shines too near us, and will probably eclipse our own brightness, either in the higher excellence of gifts, or in the more diligent improvement of them. How different was the spirit of the Jewish Lawgiver, who was willing, that all the people should share in his extraordinary gifts!² How different was the temper of the Great Apostle, who could rejoice in the extension of the Gospel from

laudatur, versatur in periculo.’ Augustine.—‘They are not our best friends, that stir the pride of our hearts by the flattery of their lips. The graces of God in others (I confess) are thankfully to be owned, and under discouragements and temptations to be wisely and modestly spoken of; but the strongest Christians do scarcely show their own weakness in any one thing more than they do in hearing their own praises. Christian! thou knowest thou carriest gunpowder about thee. Desire those that carry fire, to keep at a distance from thee. It is a dangerous crisis, when a proud heart meets with flattering lips. Faithful, seasonable, and discreet reproofs are much more safe to us, and advantageous to the mortification of sin in our souls.’ Flavel.

¹ Life, p. 43. The same Christian tenderness and self-suspicion appeared upon the report of his Ministerial success—‘I was encouraged and refreshed beyond description, and could only cheerfully and gratefully offer up myself to God’s service: but it was at the same time a check to my mind to reflect, that, though God might in his sovereignty bless his word by my mouth, I was not on that account less sinful in my Ministrations.’

² Numb. xi. 29.

unchristian motives, and by the mouth even of those, who were ranging themselves in unprovoked opposition to his disinterested labours.¹ And can we anticipate any measure of Divine influence upon our work, except this unchristian jealousy is a subject of habitual watchfulness; and except the consciousness of our secret dispositions to its indulgence covers us with self-abasement before our God?

The hinderance of this sin to the progress of the Christian Ministry *may be argued a priori* from the Scriptural character of God, as a jealous God, who "giveth not his glory to another;"² and who therefore will blast all assumptions to the honour of Divine agency, as encroachments upon his sovereign prerogative. It may also be *practically evinced* by the testimony of conscience, observation, and experience. Is not "the axe" powerless, when it dares to "boast itself against him that heweth therewith?"³ Have not we uniformly found, that those Ministrations, which have brought us most elevation and honour with men, have been scantily favoured with the tokens of the Divine presence and power? It is never likely to be so well with us, as when we are content to appear, like Paul at Corinth, "fools for Christ's sake, weak and despised;"⁴ and ready "most gladly to glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us."⁵ It is of little comparative moment that our Ministry should bear the stamp of talent, erudition, or pathos. But if it should be characterized by the savour of humility, and love, it will be best adapted to display the glories of Immanuel, and most honoured with the manifestations of his Spirit in our people.

¹ Phil. i. 15—18.

² Isa. xlii. 8.

³ Ib. x. 15.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 10.

⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABSENCE OR DEFECT OF PERSONAL RELIGION.

IT was surely not without reason or meaning, that the Apostle addressing, first the elders, and afterwards the Bishop, of the Church of Ephesus, upon their important charge, places a personal caution first in order—"Take heed to yourselves—to thyself."¹ For how awful is it to appear as a Minister, without being really a Christian! to have a competency, and even (by continual exercise) an increase of Ministerial gifts, while our real character is only, that we "have a name that we live, but we are dead!" How difficult! how dreadful! to preach an unknown Saviour! Our Lord strongly marks the importance of personal religion in his prayer for his Apostles, that they might be renewed, purified, and consecrated for their most arduous office.² It is *this; that gives power and unction* to the commission, which we profess to deliver from the mouth of God. The Roman orator has told us, that no man can be truly eloquent on a subject with which he is unacquainted.³ Nor indeed can the exhibition of unknown and unfelt truth be expected to be productive of permanent effect. Even Mr. Locke reminds us—"He is very unfit to convert others, who was never converted himself."⁴ Baxter remarks with his characteristic solemnity—"Verily, it is the common danger and calamity of the Church, to have unregenerate and unexperienced Pastors, and to have so many men become preachers, before they are Christians; to be sanctified by dedication to the altar as God's

¹ Acts xx. 28. 1 Tim. iv. 16.² John xvii. 17.³ Cic. de Orat. lib. 1.⁴ Letter on Toleration.

Priests, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication to Christ as his disciples; and so to worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, an unknown Spirit, an unknown state of holiness and communion with God, and a glory that is unknown, and likely to be unknown for ever. He is like to be but a heartless preacher, that hath not the Christ and grace that he preacheth in his heart.¹

Though indeed the blessing is in the institution, not in the instrument; yet, in the ordinary course of dispensation, a deficiency in the instrument weakens the power of the institution. The want of personal religion is therefore a most serious let and hinderance to Ministerial efficiency. In the *general work of instruction*, the experience of the power of the Gospel is necessary to direct our treatment of the different cases of our Ministry.² The recollection of the means, by which we were enlightened, and subsequently confirmed and established in the truth, is most important for the counsel of our people in cases of perplexity.—In the work of *conviction*, what but an experi-

¹ Reformed Pastor. 'No theological erudition, as such, can answer the question—"What must I do to be saved?" He who furnishes the reply, must have something better—the possession of the same religion, which he can then only satisfactorily explain to others. Otherwise he will be either struck dumb by the inquiry, or be a blind leader of the blind, confident in his own wisdom, and in that wisdom liable to perish everlastingly.' *Antichrist*, by Rev. J. Riland, p. 118. 'Neque enim aliorum salutem sedulo unquam curabit, qui suam negligit.' Calv. on Acts xx. 28. 'Unless Christ be learned spiritually and really, Divines shall speak of the word of God, as men speak of riddles, and as priests in former times said the matins, when they hardly knew what they said.' Perkins on Gal. i. 15.

² Brainerd remarked to his brother on his death-bed—'When Ministers feel these gracious influences on their hearts, it wonderfully assists them to come at the consciences of men, and as it were, handle them with their hands; whereas without them, whatever reason or oratory we make use of, we do but make use of stumps instead of hands.' See Appendix to his Life—a choice piece of Ministerial Biography.

mental perception of our own sinfulness can enable us to expose the deformity and deceitfulness of sin? Or how can we exhibit the exceeding breadth and spirituality of the law of God, except we have ourselves felt its condemning, killing power? In the more *delightful work of encouragement*, the power of administering the consolations of the Gospel is connected with the reception of them in our own hearts.¹ The love of the Saviour, the faithfulness of his word, the beauty of holiness, the prospects of eternity, will of course be most effectually exhibited by those who can say—" *We also believe, and therefore speak.*"²

Little fruitfulness can be expected in the *pulpit department of our Ministry*, in the absence or defect of the principle of heart-felt religion. 'I will be sure to live well,' (said George Herbert on the day of his induction to Bemerton) 'because the virtuous life of a clergyman is the most powerful eloquence to persuade all that see it to reverence and love, and at least to desire to live like him.'³ Indeed, what power of persuasiveness can there be in the wearisome task of speaking of Divine things without Divine affections? A man who is unable to persuade himself to be holy, can have little hope of succeeding with the consciences of others. 'I would advise such preachers' (says Baxter) 'to go to the congregation, and there preach over Origen's sermon on Psalm l. 16, 17 ;⁴

¹ 2 Cor. i. 4—6.

² Ib. iv. 13.

³ Walton's Life of George Herbert.

⁴ Referring to an affecting incident in Origen's history, when shortly after his excommunication on account of having sacrificed to the idols, he was requested, and in a manner constrained, to preach at Jerusalem. He opened his Bible, Psalm l. 16, "Unto the wicked saith God; why dost thou preach my law?" and was so overcome by the remembrance of his sin, that he closed the book with tears, and melted the whole congregation in sympathy with

and, when they have read this text, to sit down, and expound, and apply it by their tears; and then to make a free confession of their sins; and lament their case before the assembly; and desire their earnest prayers to God for pardoning and renewing grace; and so to close with Christ in heart, that before admitted him no farther than into the brain; that hereafter they may preach a Christ whom they know, and may feel what they speak, and may commend the riches of the Gospel by experience.¹ Neither genius, nor the eloquence of the schools, nor oratorical declamation are required for pulpit effect; but that Christian eloquence of feeling and of love, which marks the impression of the spirit as well as the letter of the Bible—that genuine pathos and simplicity, with which ‘a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth that which is good.’² This ‘rhetoric of the life’ Leighton justly pronounces, to ‘give to the instructions of the pulpit an energy, far beyond the reach of the loftiest strains of unhallowed oratory.’ To obtain this most desirable qualification, we must ourselves taste the word, before we distribute it to our people. We must carefully connect it with our devotional reading, and with our sacred retirement. A sermon, however well digested, can never be well

his sorrow—Clark’s *Marrow of Ecclesiastical History*, where are given his own most striking expressions of grief and contrition on the occasion—pp. 20—23.

¹ Reformed Pastor. ‘To preach of regeneration, of faith, when a man has no spiritual understanding of these things, is to talk of the sweetness of honey, when we never tasted it; or of the excellency of such a country, which we were never in, but know by maps only. If thou knowest the truths of God but by books, by authors only, and thy own heart feeleth not the power of these things; thou art but as the conduit, that letteth out wine or refreshing water to others, but thou thyself tastest not of it: or like the hand that directeth the passenger, but thou thyself standest still.’ Anthony Burgess’s *Funeral Sermon for Rev. T. Blake*.

² *Matt. xii. 34.*

preached, until it has been first preached to ourselves.¹ It is the present experience, nourishment, and enjoyment, that gives a glow of unction and spiritual influence, far beyond the power of adventitious accomplishment; and makes us not only edifying to our people, but (what is more rare and difficult) profitable Ministers to ourselves. To bear our message written upon our hearts, is the best method of conveying to our people deep and weighty impressions of the things of God. We must bring them something not only—"which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," but—"which our hands have handled of the word of life, if we desire them to have joint-fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."² Like John the Baptist,³ we should behold the Saviour ourselves, and point him out to our people from our own perception of his glory and love.

The important connexion of personal religion with Ministerial success is yet further evident, *in confirming the testimony of the Gospel with the power of a Christian example.*⁴—'Men judge things more fully by the eye

¹ This was Doddridge's custom, of which Orton has preserved several interesting specimens.—See Life of Doddridge, chap. ii. Do not we thus penetrate into our subject with more depth and spiritual discernment, than mere thought or critical study could furnish? For may not these be employed *even upon our pulpit exercises*, without any of that tender seriousness and compassion for perishing souls, and sense of Ministerial obligation, which become the public discharge of our office? Mr. Robert Bolton (one of the most eminent divines in the seventeenth century) professed on his death-bed, 'that he never taught any godly point, but he first wrought in on his own heart.' Mr. Shepard of New England gave the same testimony. How confidently, when we have thus proved our armour, may we venture to recommend it!

² John i. 1—3.

³ John i. 36.

⁴ The judgment of the ancient church was most concurrent on this particular.—'Non possunt quæ doces habere firmitatem, nisi ea prior feceris.' Lactan. Instit. Lib. 4. c. 24. 'Non confundant opera tua sermonem tuum: ne, cum Ecclesiâ loqueris,

than by the ear; consequently Ministers' practice is as much regarded, if not more than their sermons. So that—suppose in the pulpit they should resemble Holy Angels, yet if in conversation they be found but very ordinary, carnal men; 'tis not a thousand elaborate discourses, which will be able, either solidly to impress their hearers with the faith of reality in religion, or any way engage their souls practically to fall in love with the same.'¹ Fenelon well observes, in his Dialogue on Eloquence—'that moral instructions have no weight nor influence, when they are neither supported by clear principles, nor good examples. Whom do you see converted by them? People are accustomed to hear such harangues, and are amused by them, as with so many fine scenes passing before their eyes. They hearken to such lectures, just as they would read a satire, and they look on the speaker as one that acts his part well. They believe his life more than his talk, and when they know him to be selfish, ambitious, vain, given to sloth and luxury, and see that he parts with none of those enjoyments, which he exhorts others to forsake; though for the sake of custom and ceremony they hear him declaim, they believe and act as he does. But what is worst

tacitus quilibet respondeat, cur ergo hæc quæ dicis, ipse non facis? Sacerdotis Christi os, mens, manusque concordent.' Hieron ad Nepot. The council of Trent also exhibited an elevated standard of Ministerial consistency—'Nihil est, quod alios magis ad pietatem et Dei cultum assidue instruat, quam eorum vita et exemplum, qui se Divino Ministerio dedicarunt, &c. Quapropter sic decet omnino clericos in sortem Domini vocatos, vitam moresque suos omnes componere, ut habitu, gestu, incessu, sermone, aliisque omnibus rebus nil nisi grave, moderatum, ac religione plenum præ se ferant, &c.' Concil. Trid. Sess. 22. c. 1. Care however must be taken to distinguish between the self-righteousness of a mere external gravity, and the spirituality of character, resulting from evangelical principles, and influencing the heart to all the exercises of Ministerial devotedness.

¹ Blackwell's Methodus Homiletica, 1712—a valuable work.

of all, people are too apt to conclude, that men of this profession do not believe what they teach. This disparages their function; and when others preach with a sincere zeal, people will scarce believe this zeal to be sincere.¹ It is therefore most important, that our lives should exhibit such a fair and accurate transcript of our doctrine, as may afford a constant remembrance and a powerful support of our public instructions—‘not only putting the copy before our people, and leaving them to write; but taking the pen, and showing them how to form each letter.’² The Minister is a continual—not a periodical—character. “The beauty of holiness” must not be merely the appurtenance of the Sabbath. A holy sermon is but for an hour. A holy life is his perpetual sermon—the palpable exposition of many difficulties in his preaching. Thus (as one of the Fathers³ observed of our Divine Master) he will often ‘preach, when he does not open his mouth,’—like a faithful shepherd—who, “when he putteth forth his own sheep, goeth before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”⁴ It was truly, though quaintly,

¹ ‘The Priest,’ (observes Bishop Bull) ‘who is not clothed with righteousness—though otherwise richly adorned with all the ornaments of human and divine literature, and those gilded over with the rays of seraphic prudence—is yet but a naked, beggarly, despicable creature, of no authority, no interest, no use, no service in the Church of God.’ Sermon in Clergym. Instruct. p. 286. The inscription—‘Holiness to the Lord’—upon the costly dress of the High Priest—strongly marks the adorning of the profession of the Ministers of the Sanctuary. Exod. xxviii. 28—30. with xxxix. 30, 31. Comp. Lev. xxi. 21.

² Scott. Comp. 1 Tim. iv. 12.

³ Theophylact on Matt. v. 2.

⁴ John x. 3, 4. ‘The Minister who would win his people must not only *Doctorem virtutis se præbere, sed ducem*—as Lactantius; ‘ut si præcipientem sequi nolint, sequantur antecedentem.’ Bp. Reynold’s Works, p. 1061. The inscription which Herodotus mentions to have been on the tomb of an Egyptian king, should be the Minister’s motto—‘Εἰς ἐμὲ τὶς ὀρεῶν, εὐσεβὴς ἐστὼ.’

remarked by the old divines, that a Minister's life is the life of his Ministry. For (as Bishop Horne observes) 'he who undertakes to reprove the world, must be one, whom the world cannot reprove.'¹ We should each of us consider ourselves as the appointed luminary in our respective spheres—placed as the centre of the system—the source of light and warmth to all within our circle of influence. We should thus be "burning" as well as "shining lights."² We need not always blaze; but we must always burn. There must be love as well as light—the light of holy love.³

The importance of personal godliness in Ministers has been painfully exhibited in the deep wounds of the Church from their open ungodliness or inconsistency. "The sin of Eli's sons was very great before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord."⁴ And in what age have not these young men found their successors, in men, who have "builded again" with their lives "the things which they had destroyed" by their doctrine, and have made "themselves trans-

¹ Considerations on John the Baptist, p. 81. ² John v. 35.

³ Bishop Taylor exhorts us most admirably on this subject—"You may be innocent, and yet not "zealous of good works:" but if you be not this, you are not good ministers of Jesus Christ. You must be excellent, not *tanquam unus de populo*, but *tanquam homo Dei*—not after the common manner of men, but "after God's own heart"—not only pure, but shining—not only blameless, but didactic, in your lives; that, as by your sermons you preach "in season," so by your lives you may preach "out of season"—that is—at all seasons, and to all men; that "they, seeing your good works, may glorify God on your behalf" and on their own.' Sermon on the Minister's duty in life and doctrine, Works, vol. vi.—'When prejudices are to be overcome, or ignorance to be removed, it is necessary to show, that the man, who labours to introduce new modes of feeling and thinking, is not only the convert of his own opinions, but an example of their practical influence in forming a spiritual character.' Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, pp. 170, 171.

⁴ 1 Sam. ii. 17.

gressors" with a guilty load of responsibility? ¹ On the other hand, the power of a consistent Ministry has been often manifested. When Levi had "the law of truth in his mouth, *he did turn many away from iniquity.*" ² The holiness of the faithful ministry of John struck awe even into wicked Herod, while "many for a season," and many probably for more than a season, "rejoiced in his light." ³ Doubtless much of the secret of the Apostle's success in Thessalonica was found in the public appeal, which he was enabled to make—"Ye are witnesses, and God also; how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe." ⁴ 'Happy those labourers in the Church, the secret savour of whose life and conversation attracts people after Christ!' ⁵

The Missionary Eliot 'imposed a law upon himself, that he would leave something of God, and heaven, and religion, with all that should come near him; so that in all places his company was attended with majesty and reverence. We cannot say, that we ever saw him walking any whither, but he was therein walking with God; and it might be said of him, as was said of Origen—'*Quemadmodum docet, sic vixit: and quemadmodum vixit sic docet.*'' ⁶ Now such an habitual Ministry, spreading the atmosphere of heaven over the ordinary employments of secular life, proves the stamp of a Divine impression, and in

¹ Nisi ipsi sacerdotes in omnibus virtutibus Christianis fidelium exemplaria sint—plus improba vita destruunt, quam sana doctrina ædificant: dedecori sunt sanctissimæ religioni; de veritate eorum, quæ prædicant addubitare docent: atque ita libertinismo et atheismo latam portam pandunt. Wits. de Vero Theologo. Hence the severe sarcasm against Ministers of an inconsistent profession—'That when in the pulpit they ought never to come out, and when out, they ought never to go in again.' ² Mal. ii. 5, 6.

³ Mark vi. 20. John v. 35. Comp. Acts xi. 24.

⁴ 1 Thess. ii. 10.

⁵ Quesnel on Mark vi. 33.

⁶ Mather's Life of Eliot.

“manifestation of the truth commends itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” It is the picture of the “angel standing in the sun”—the undoubted representative of the Divine Majesty.

As one further illustration of the importance of Ministerial godliness—we might remark *the power, by which it enables us to water the seed sown with fervent prayer.* For as prayer is the life of spiritual religion, it follows of necessity, that a spiritual Minister will be a man of prayer. But having already expanded this point of detail,¹ we only now advert to it, to mark the mutual relations and bearings of every department of the sacred office.

But it may be asked—Do we sufficiently consider, how much our personal religion is endangered from the very circumstance of religion being our profession? We are laid under a necessity (if we have any regard to our character or office) to keep at a more than common distance from outward sins (which however is only a casual restraint—not, a radical principle of resistance). Our work employs us in the continual exercise of our gifts, which, in the excitement and commendation often connected with them, may be readily mistaken for grace. Great indeed is the danger of resting in an official piety—in public religion. Awful indeed is the reflection—how much of our fervid animation in pulpit exercises is purely mechanical! how much more is there of excitement than of spirituality! In going therefore through the duties, putting on the appearances, speaking the language, and exhibiting the feelings, of religion—what care! what watchfulness! what tenderness of heart! what earnest prayer! is required to preserve the spirit of

¹ See Chap. vi.

religion. Have none of us cause to complain—"They made me keeper of the vineyards; *but mine own vineyard have I not kept?*"¹ Does not the cultivation of the wilderness sometimes lead us unconsciously to overlook the growth of the weeds within our own garden? Are we never satisfied with being the instruments of grace, without being habitually the subjects of it. Yet of how little moment is it to "minister grace to our hearers," if we minister it not to ourselves! Is not conscience often rebuked by the assumed identity of our personal and official character? For, though the concentration of our employments in Divine things has clothed us officially with a spiritual garb;² yet who of us can have failed to discover, that spirituality of doctrine is not always connected with corresponding spirituality of heart or conduct? The best of us probably are far more spiritual in our pulpits than in our closets, and find less effort required to preach against all the sins of our people, than to mortify one of them in our own hearts. Oh! how much more easy is it to preach from the understanding than from the heart! to expound the truth with satisfactory clearness to our people, and with delusive complacency to ourselves; than to be ourselves so moulded into its spirit, as to enjoy a holy preparation of heart in the previous study of it, its heavenly savour at the time of the delivery, and its experimental and practical influence in the after recollection.

This difficulty springs out of the peculiar self-deception connected with our employment. We are apt to merge our personal in our professional character, and in the Minister to forget the Christian. But time must be found for the spiritual feeding upon

¹ Can. i. 6.

² See Hosea ix. 7.

Scriptural truths, as well as for a critical investigation of their meaning, or for a Ministerial consultation of their direction. For if we should study the Bible more as Ministers than as Christians—more to find matter for the instruction of our people, than food for the nourishment of our own souls; we neglect to place ourselves at the feet of our Divine Teacher, our communion with him is cut off, and we become mere formalists in our sacred profession. Mr. Martyn seems to have been tenderly conscious of this temptation—‘Every time’ (he remarked) ‘that I open the scriptures, my thoughts are about a sermon or exposition; so that even in private I seem to be reading in public.’¹ It is plain, that we cannot live by feeding others; or heal ourselves by the mere employment of healing our people; and therefore by this course of official service, our familiarity with the awful realities of death and eternity may be rather like that of the grave-digger, the physician, and the soldier, than the man of God, who, viewing eternity with deep seriousness and concern, brings to his people the profitable fruit of his heavenly contemplations. It has been well remarked—that, ‘when once a man begins to

¹ Martyn’s Life, p. 60. The godly jealousy, with which this devoted Christian watched against the subtle influence of this temptation, is most instructive.—‘I see’ (he observes at a later period) ‘how great are the temptations of a Missionary to neglect his own soul. Apparently outwardly employed for God, my heart has been growing more hard and proud. *Let me be taught, that the first great business on earth is the sanctification of my own soul; so shall I be rendered more capable also of performing the duties of the Ministry in a holy solemn manner.* pp. 263, 264. The same spirit of incessant watchfulness was exercised in the work of translations—‘May the Lord in mercy to my soul save me from setting up an idol of any sort in his place; as I do by preferring even a work professedly for him, to communion with him..’ “To obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Let me learn from this, that to follow the direct injunctions of God about my own soul, is more my duty, than to be engaged in other works, under pretence of doing him service.’ p. 272.

view religion not as of personal, but merely of professional importance, he has an obstacle in his course, with which a private Christian is unacquainted.¹ It is indeed difficult to determine, whether our familiar intercourse with the things of God is more our temptation or our advantage. For what accurate self-observer has not verified Butler's remarks on the repetition of passive impressions;² and found the effect of formal Ministerial repetition to be of a rapidly and powerfully hardening character?³ As

¹ Wilks's Essay on Conversion and Unconversion in Christian Ministers, p. 14.

² Analogy, Part. i. ch. 5. Paley mentions among the chief impediments to the Christian Ministry—"the insensibility to religious impressions, which a constant conversation with religious subjects, and, still more, a constant intermixture with religious offices, is wont to induce." He remarks—most justly—"that the consequence of repetition will be felt more sensibly by us, who are in the habit of directing our arguments to others; for it always requires a second, a separate, and an unusual effort of the mind, to bring back the conclusion upon ourselves. In all the thoughts and study, which we employ upon our arguments, what we are apt to hold continually in view, is the effect, which they may produce upon those, who hear or read them. The further and best use of our meditation (their influence upon our own hearts and consciences) is lost in the presence of the other." Sermon on the Dangers of the Clerical character, Works, viii. 137—142.

³ Massillon speaks with awful solemnity of the case of a formal Minister—"He contracts a callousness by his insensible way of handling Divine matters; by which he becomes hardened against them, and by which he is so far put out of the reach of conviction, in all the ordinary means of grace, that it is scarce possible he can ever be awakened, and by consequence, that he can be saved." Not less awful is the language of Dr. Owen—"He that would go down to the pit in peace, let him obtain a great repute for religion; let him preach and labour to make others better than he is himself, and in the mean time neglect to humble his heart to walk with God in a manifest holiness and usefulness, and he will not fail of his end." Sermons and Tracts, folio. p. 47. 'It is shocking' (as Gurnal remarks in his pointed style) 'to fall into hell from under the pulpit—how much more so from out of the pulpit!' Is it supposed, that a holy office makes us holy? Let it be remembered, that Judas "*fell from his Apostleship, that he might go to his own place.*" Acts i. 25. And does not every unconverted Minister carry about with him in his very commission his own sentence of condemnation? Mark xvi. 16.

the natural consequence of going through the daily and Sabbath routine of employment without renewed fire from the altar, the doctrines of the Gospel will be maintained, while the assimilation of our character to their heavenly spirit will be totally neglected. And in the absence of this spiritual character—what is our Ministry more than a beautiful and correct mechanism, without quickening influence, unvisited by the Spirit of God, and unblest with the tokens of his acceptance ?

Upon the whole, therefore, our personal character must be admitted to have weighty influence upon our Ministrations. “Simplicity and godly sincerity” disinterestedness, humility, and general consistency of profession—are an “epistle known and read of all men.” On the contrary, the lack of these Christian graces must blast our success, by bringing the genuineness of our own religion, and the practical efficacy of the Gospel, under suspicion. Apart also from the natural effect of our public character, there is also a secret but penetrating influence diffused by the habitual exercise of Christian principles. Who will deny, that—had he been a more spiritual Christian—he would probably have been a more useful Minister ? May we not expect, that he, who is most fervent and abundant in secret prayer, most constant in his studies, most imbued with his Master’s spirit, most single in his object, most upright and persevering in the pursuit of it—will be most honoured in his work ? For is not he likely to be filled with an extraordinary unction ? Will not he speak most “of the abundance of his heart ?” And will not his flock “take knowledge of him,” as living in the presence of his God ; and “receive him” in his pastoral visits and pulpit addresses, “as an angel of God—even as Christ Jesus ?”

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEFECT OF FAMILY RELIGION ; AND THE WANT
OF CONNEXION OF THE MINISTER'S FAMILY WITH
HIS WORK.

THE qualifications necessary for a Christian Bishop were evidently meant to apply to the lower orders of the Ministry. And not among the least important are those, which mark the Christian Minister in his family government. 'A family' (as Quesnel beautifully observes) 'is a small diocese, in which the first essays are made of the Episcopal and Ecclesiastical zeal, piety, and prudence.'¹ If therefore "a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"² For he cannot

¹ Quesnel on 1 Tim. iii. 12.

² 1 Tim. iii. 5. Our Church fully recognizes the importance of this subject, in demanding of each of her candidates for the holy office a distinct pledge of family godliness.—'Will you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves *and your families* according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both yourselves *and them*, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ? I will apply myself thereto, the Lord being my helper.' Service for Ordination of Deacons. 'This is the injunction of the Apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 12. And the same command was enforced by the ancient laws of the church, which were much stricter concerning Clergymen's wives, children, and servants, than those of the laity. The houses of Ministers should be the schools of virtue, little emblems of a church, and patterns for all their parishioners, of peace and good order, sobriety and devotion.' Comber. Compare also Dr. Nicholls, in Bishop Mant's notes on the service. It was a frequent petition of the excellent Philip Henry in his family worship—'That we might have grace to carry it, as a Minister, and a Minister's wife, and a Minister's children, and a Minister's servants, should carry it; *that the Ministry might in nothing be blamed.*' Life, p. 81. The testimony on this point of one of the most determined enemies of Christianity, is also remarkable. The Emperor Julian, in endeavouring to re-establish Paganism—and accounting (as he declares) the 'strictness and sanctity professed by Christians, one

reasonably expect to perform in his parish the work, which he has not cared to accomplish at home. The mark set upon Eli's family¹ illustrates the necessity of the regulation, that an elder must be one, 'having faithful children,'² Though he cannot convey grace to his children, at least he can enforce restraint, and acquit himself of the guilt of "honouring his sons before God."³ He can inculcate upon them the responsibility of a consistent conduct in promoting the design of his Ministry—the importance of 'adorning not only their Christian profession, but their parent's principles; and of showing, that the principles of their father's house and Ministry are the rule of their conduct, and their real delight.'⁴

Mr. Herbert's 'Country Parson'⁵ is very exact in the governing of his house, making it a copy and a model for his parish. His family is a school of religion.' This opens a wide field; including daily exercises of family worship—the whole circle of family instruction—the principles of education, essentially Christian, and with a constant reference to a scrip-

of the main causes of the prevalence of their faith—gives directions (unquestionably copied from the injunctions to the primitive priesthood) that the heathen priests should be men of serious temper and deportment—that they be neither expensive nor showy in their dress—go to no entertainments, but such as are made by the worthiest persons—never be seen at the public games and spectacles—and *take care, that their wives and children and servants be pious as well as themselves.* *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Archbishop Secker thus briefly applies this testimony, 'Let not (I entreat you) this apostate put you to shame.' Jul. Epist. 49, ad Arsac, p. 430, 431. Fragm. Epist. pp. 301—305. Secker's Charges, pp. 244, 245.

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 17. iii. 13.

² Tit. i. 5, 6.

³ 1 Sam. ii. 29.

⁴ Richmond's Life, p. 294, 295. The transgression of the daughter of the Priest was severely punished by the Mosaic law, from the disgrace that was thus brought upon the holy office. Lev. xxi. 9.

⁵ Chap. x.

tural basis—the regulation of conversational habits within the domestic sphere—all bearing a concurrent testimony to the doctrine of the pulpit *in its fullest detail*. *Habits of order* also form an important part of this Christian model—doing every thing at its proper time—keeping every thing to its proper use—putting every thing in its proper place. Regularity in the payment of bills, and a strict avoiding of debts—are here worthy of high consideration. With respect to children—a clear practical illustration of the rules of order, submission, and indulgence, which we should give to our people is of great moment. How many of us in this point are wise for others, and yet unwise for ourselves ! Perhaps there is no particular, on which self-deception is more frequent, or on which we are so little open to conviction, as in the management of children. The importance of order in the regulation of our servants is most obvious—Let them not be over-burdened. A trifle spent in procuring additional help will often prevent causes of irritation, confusion, and what is more than all, the necessary loss of the private duties of religion. Let conscientious attendance upon these duties be encouraged—allowance be made for infirmities—patience and forbearance be constantly maintained—sympathy be shewn in all their trials and difficulties—family reading be followed with private instruction—Thus let the Ministerial character pervade the lower departments of the household, in dealing with every member of the house with tender consideration and spiritual counsel ; as if interested in their temporal welfare, and responsible for the care of their most important concerns.

In Bishop Hooper's family—' in every corner of the house there was some smell of virtue, good example,

honest conversation, and scripture reading.¹ Of Mr. Joseph Alleine (an admirable pattern of a Christian Pastor) it is said—‘that, as he walked about the house, he would make some spiritual use of every thing that did occur, and his lips did drop like the honey-comb to all that were about him.’² The economy of Philip Henry’s family exhibited the most beautiful and complete display of Christian godliness, simplicity, and order, constructed upon the patriarchal principle of “commanding his children and household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice.”³ These are fine models for the pastor’s constant recollection what should be—a domestic Minister—the pastor of “the Church in his own house.”

A Minister is indeed “a city set upon an hill, that

¹ Clark’s Marrow of Ecclesiastical History, p. 222, and Fox’s Life of Hooper.

² Alleine’s Life and Letters, pp. 97—100.

³ Gen. xviii. 19. Compare Philip Henry’s Life, pp. 82—86. Cotton Mather’s family picture is less known. He prayed for each of his children distinctly—interested them early with engaging stories from Scripture, as the vehicle of inculcating lessons of practical usefulness. He had always a word for his children, when they fell in his way. Their habits of secret prayer were early formed, and often brought to mind—‘Child, don’t forget every day to go alone and pray, as you have been taught.’ He endeavoured to enlarge their minds in Christian love, by engaging them daily in some ‘essay to do good’ for one another. He encouraged and commended them, when he saw them take pleasure in it; and let them know, that a backwardness to it was highly displeasing to him. When they were old enough, he would take them alone one by one; and after many affectionate and solemn charges, to fear God, to love Christ, and to hate sin, he would let them witness his earnest melting prayers on their account. He catechised them on every part of the Gospel, turning every truth into a question; as the best way of gaining their attention, of informing their minds upon it, and applying it to their hearts. It is no wonder, that such consistency and diligence in the domestic Ministry were associated with uncommon power in his public work. The pattern expounded the doctrine with irresistible force of application and encouragement.

cannot be hid." He must expect not only his personal character, but his domestic arrangements—the conduct of his wife, the dress and habits of his children and servants, the furniture of his house, and the provision of his table—to be the subject of daily and most scrutinizing observation. And this is indeed a matter of most serious responsibility. For the correctness of our family system thus becomes to a great extent the standard within our sphere; while any inconsistencies attaching to it too often furnish excuse for the neglect of duty, or the positive indulgence of sin. The detail of family religion is also a component part of the Christian Ministry; inculcating principles of parental restraint and dutiful subjection—of constant instruction and superintendence—of precept illustrated by example—and of the daily exhibition in the domestic circle of the habits of Christian self-denial, holiness, cheerfulness, and love. Now, (as men are influenced much more by what they see, than by what they hear) if the parsonage does not show the pattern as well as the doctrine, exhortations from thence will only excite the ridicule and offence of the ungodly, and confirm them in their habits of sin. How different must be the influence in our parishes, where the several members of our families appear as consistent Christians, or as ungodly or thoughtless sinners! Instances are not a few, where the power of a faithful Ministry—even with the seal of personal consistency—has been utterly paralyzed from the absence of the holy stamp of the sacred office upon the domestic œconomy.¹ It is therefore of no small moment, that expensiveness of habits, studied attention to ornament, and every

¹ See some striking matter of conviction on 'suspicious appearances in a Minister's Family,' in 'Negative Rules given to a Young Minister.'—Cecil's Remains.

mark of "the course of this world's" pleasure or vanity should be repressed—not only or chiefly upon the ground of pecuniary inconvenience, but from the prejudicial impressions that are thus made upon our people.

The Apostle notices the example of the Minister's wife in gravity, self-control, sobriety of deportment, and faithful exhibition of relative and public duties, in connexion with the great objects of the Christian Ministry.¹ And of such importance is this considered, that 'in the Protestant Churches of Hungary, they degrade a pastor, whose wife indulges herself in cards, dancing, or any other public amusements, which bespeak the gaiety of a lover of the world rather than the gravity of a Christian matron. This severity springs from the supposition; that the woman, having promised obedience to her husband, can do nothing but what he either directs or approves. Hence they conclude, that—example having a greater weight than precept—the wife of a Minister, if she is inclined to the world, will preach worldly compliance with more success by her conduct, than her husband can preach the renunciation of the world by the most solemn discourses. And the incredulity of the stumbled flock will always be the consequence of that unhappy inconsistency, which is observable between the serious instructions of a well-disposed Minister, and the trifling conduct of a woman, with whom he is so intimately connected.'²

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 11.

² Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul, p. 129, note—'A Minister's public labours are intimately connected with his private and domestic consultations. A Minister's wife may be a main-spring of encouragement or discouragement to her husband in all his arduous and anxious occupations for the good of his flock. On her example and demeanour very much may often depend'—Letter of Rev. L. Richmond to his daughter, on the day of her marriage to a Clergyman. Life, p. 511.

But does the exemplification of Christian consistency constitute the whole requirement of the domestic œconomy? Is there no superadded obligation of direct subserviency to the grand design of the Ministry? It has been well remarked by a living Minister, (whose domestic and parochial character gives just weight to his observation,) that ‘*a Clergyman’s family, house, occupations, and every thing connected with him, should be consistent; and all family arrangements made subordinate to his parochial duties*¹—that is (of course with due regard to prudential considerations)—to the allowance of the largest scope for the various schemes of Ministerial exercise, and for the most advantageous points of contact with the flock.

And how does this subject remind us of the momentous responsibility connected with the Minister’s marriage choice! Apart from the Scriptural rule of a Christian’s decision—“Only in the Lord”²—there are motives of a less selfish character, that should influence a Minister’s determination. The character of his Ministry will be formed, or moulded, by this critical change of circumstances. He will not be the man he was: he will be under the constraint of new inclinations and principles of action.³ His people will be most materially affected by his new relation. If they are not benefited by the change, they must suffer loss. Even a Christian connexion may cripple his energies, (if from natural hinderances, adventitious disadvantages, or spiritual causes, there is a want of experience, sympathy, and help in his work,) and he will be less of a Minister than before—less excited,

¹ Parochial Duties practically illustrated—(Seeleys and Hatchard,)—a most interesting and exciting sketch of Ministerial devotedness.

² 1 Cor. vii. 39.

³ Ib. 32, 33.

less interested, less unfettered, less efficient.¹ Surely if a Minister should stamp *every act* of his life not only with the impress of a Christian, but with the high dignity, singleness, and elevation of his sacred office—how much more *this act*, which must prove the crisis of his course, the grand momentum of his future operations! If the sense of his awful responsibility has ever awakened the complaint—“I am not able to bear all this people *alone*, because it is too heavy for me”—may he not expect in the course of Providence and in answer to prayer, the gift of one, who may stand to him as the seventy elders of Israel to Moses—endued with his spirit, for the express purpose of “bearing the burden of the people with him, that he *bear it not himself alone?*”² There is, or ought to be, this difference between a Christian and a Ministerial choice. A Christian wants a helpmeet for himself—a Minister wants *besides* a yoke-fellow in his work: he wants for his people as well as for himself. It cannot be doubted, that the Christian Ministry has been greatly weakened by the dissociation of the Minister's wife from the service of the Lord.

¹ It is scarcely to be calculated,' (remarks Mr. Cecil) ' what an influence the spirit of a Minister's wife will have on his own, and on all his Ministerial affairs. If she come not up to the full standard, she will so far impede him, derange him, unsanctify him. If there is such a thing as good in the world, it is in the Ministerial office. The affairs of this employment are the greatest in the world. In prosecuting these with a right spirit, the Minister keeps in motion a vast machine; and such are the incalculable consequences of his wife's character to him, that if she assist him not in urging forward the machine, she will hang as a dead weight upon its wheels.'—Cecil's Remains.

² See Num. xi. 11—17. with Prov. xviii. 22. xix. 14. Mr. Baxter thus solved the question—' Ought a clergyman to marry ? ' ' Yes ; but *let him think, and think, and think again before he does it.* ' ' Quod statuendum est semel, deliberandum est diu.' Adherence to this rule, acted out in prayer for divine direction, will be not less instrumental to personal comfort than to Ministerial usefulness.

In every sphere there are departments peculiarly fitted for her. Circumstances of propriety often (as in the female department of instruction) hinder the Minister from acting up to the full extent of his responsibility. In other circumstances, a press of labour, or interference with other avocations of immediate call and urgent necessity, renders the counsel and active services of a true yoke-fellow of most important advantage. Where, therefore, a mistake was made in the original choice of a partner, and a sense of Ministerial responsibility on the part of the wife is unfelt,¹ much of the ground lies unbroken, or imperfectly cultivated; and much promise of an abundant harvest is blighted. A Minister's wife may indeed be a mother of a family, and bound with personal responsibilities, over which there is no control. But may not time (the extent of which indeed conscience must determine) be redeemed for the work of the Lord, without intrenching upon other most imperative claims? Should she not aspire to the honour of being a spiritual as well as a natural mother? Should she have no connection with her husband's spiritual family? Should she not desire to be a partner of his Ministry as well as of his life? Is she content, by dissociating herself from his public work, to share but *half his sympathy*, to bear but a

¹ Let us mark the female obligations of the Ministry, at once confirmed and encouraged by a death-bed testimony—'When eternity was full in view, and when she expected to stand shortly before the bar of God, she could and did say—'I have laboured for the parish: yes, I have laboured for the parish; and, if the Lord spare my life, I will *labour more for it than I have ever yet done.*' Funeral Sermon for Mrs. Bolland, wife of Rev. W. Bolland, Swineshead, Lincolnshire. This instance, among many others, may show, that, if there is no express letter of Scripture requirement upon this subject, the obligation is acknowledged and felt to be legitimately inferred from the post, which the Minister's wife officially and relatively occupies in the Church of Christ.

very small portion of his burdens ? Her characteristic should be the main feature of the gospel—a *disciple of the cross*. In uniting herself to a Christian Minister, she has bound herself to his work and to his cross ; and must expect—as far as she appears by her husband's side—not only to sympathize, but actually to share, in the double measure of hardness, misrepresentation, and reproach, portioned out to the faithful Minister : trials, that will exercise all those habits of love, humility, patience, and self-denial, that constitute the spirit of the cross. Nothing connected with her can be neutral. Should she wrap herself up in cold indifference to the advancement of her husband's Ministry, regardless of the line of conduct best adapted to strengthen his most important interests—or even, should she “faint and be weary” *of the work rather than in it*, she must clog the wheels of the machine, instead of supplying oil for its accelerated progress. Any lack also of kindness or consideration on her part widens the distance between the pastor and his flock ; and restrains many of those sources of Ministerial communication, which are the fruitful channels of mutual enlargement and support. On the other hand, by a natural spirit of conciliation and flow of sympathy much, that otherwise had been restrained, is drawn forth with freedom ;¹ and an additional bond of reciprocal attachment is formed between the father and his numerous family. Thus is the confidence of the female part of our charge obtained—opening to us a most interesting medium

¹ Cotton Mather mentions an interesting instance of this in a Minister's wife—that the women would freely ‘open their griefs’ to her ; ‘who, acquainting her husband with convenient intimations thereof, occasioned him in his public Ministry more particularly and profitably to discourse on those things that were of everlasting benefit.’ Mather's New England, Book iii. p. 17.

of pastoral intercourse, and a most valuable pledge of permanent and extensive usefulness. Even under unfavourable circumstances, affecting the personal character of the Minister, not unfrequently have the dignity and usefulness of the office been sustained by the weight of female responsibility; nor are instances wanting of this manifest, extensive, and valuable influence, which have made it doubtful whether the Minister or his partner were more useful in the pastoral charge.¹ It is however important, that in the general system each should keep to their own department. Interference hurts the independence, and weakens the influence, of both. But happy indeed is the pastor, whose partner is thus the mother of his people, as well as the director and guardian in his family circle. Happy indeed must he be in offering his grateful acknowledgment for this special mercy to himself and to his flock.

May the Writer be permitted further to suggest, that the pastor's family worship should partake of the character of a ministration to his people. Such were Philip Henry's daily exercises;² and (in our own times) those of the late excellent Mr. Scott³—exercises, that appear to have been attended with a remarkable blessing, and of which (happily for us) most valuable details are preserved. Preparation of mind and study is needed to give life and refreshment to this course of social worship. The service should not be too long.

¹ An instance lately came within the writer's knowledge, where the devoted labours of a Minister's wife, lately deceased, in a parochial sphere, attended with much personal inconvenience, were honoured with no less than eleven instances of decided conversion to God.

² Philip Henry's Life, pp. 72—81. Mr. Wesley, in recommending Philip Henry's Life to his people, pointed out his mode of conducting family worship as a pattern.

³ Scott's Life, pp. 71—76.

Guard should be kept against formality. Faith and expectation must be the life and spring of the exercises. Variety in the course, (as—for example—the occasional mixture of catechetical instruction) would be desirable—A larger portion of Scripture than of exposition would often interest those who have their Bibles before them, and might encourage and direct to a full and comprehensive search of the sacred field. A large heart in intercessory prayer, is also of the highest moment. Our interest must not be selfish, or even contracted within the limits of our own sphere. Let it embrace in daily supplication the whole church, and the necessities of a fallen world; else, by the omission or slight touch of this exercise of love, we not only preclude our families from opportunities of Christian usefulness, but we neglect to interest them in an important part of their practical obligations.

We are led to ask—from an acquaintance with the domestic Ministrations of some of our brethren—Ought not our family course to offer to the household something beyond the formal routine, in the way of familiar, close, and affectionate exhortation? And might not the circle of instruction extend to any beyond the bounds of the parsonage, that might be willing to improve the advantage? It may be doubted, whether the mere reading of excellent expositions is suitable to our office, or likely to be impressive in effect. For none of them can supply in the manner or matter of address, that adaptation to the different shades of character, and the ever-varying circumstances of the family, which seems necessary to give power and interest to the daily repetition of the social worship. The family use of Scott's Commentary was probably intended chiefly

for the assistance of the laity, or (in the clerical use of the work) to supply solid and useful materials for *free exposition*. The Ministerial qualification—"apt to teach"—and the character of "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," suppose an ability to "bring forth out of our treasure things new and old," for daily as well as Sabbath ministrations.¹ Oh! how do we need the spirit of prayer, and the active habit of faith, constantly to maintain our watchfulness in "neglecting not," and our diligence in "stirring up," for daily use, "the gift of God that is in us by the putting on of hands!"² The exercise of our spiritual gifts is equally connected with our personal happiness and Ministerial fruitfulness. Every fresh exercise links us to our people with "a cord" of reciprocal feeling, that "is not quickly broken:" and proves the appointed means of opening their hearts to the reception, and the more established enjoyment, of the truth. Our sphere of parochial labour in every department thus becomes an over-spreading "shadow," inviting our people to "dwell under it;"³ so that, in the recollection of its enlivening refreshment, they are ready to adopt Philip Henry's exclamation at the close of the Sabbath—'Well; if this be not the way to heaven, I do not know what is.'⁴

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 2. Matt. xiii. 52. An American divine encouraged his son to these familiar exercises with the assurance, that he had found as much advantage by them as by most of his other studies in divinity; adding, that he looked upon it as the Lord's gracious accomplishment of that word—"Shall I *hide any thing* from Abraham? For I know Abraham, that he will command," &c. Mather's New England, iii. 150.

² 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

³ Alluding to Hos. xiv. 7.

⁴ Philip Henry's Life, p. 192.

CHAPTER X.

WANT OF FAITH.

THE Baptist Missionary Society was raised upon two simple ideas, suggested by Dr. Carey, in a sermon upon Isaiah liv. 2, 3, shortly before his embarkation for India—‘Expect great things—attempt great things.’ This expectation is the life of faith—the vitality of the Ministry—that which honours God, and is honoured by God. All our failures may be ultimately traced to a defect of faith. We ask but for little, we expect but little, we are satisfied with little, and therefore we gain and do but little.¹ Our Saviour called this principle into exercise in almost all his miracles, and his Almighty power appeared to be (so to speak) fettered by the want of it in those that heard him.² And indeed the analogy of the remarkable connection between faith and miracles seems to encourage the hope of success in the exercise of faith, with respect to the greatest of all spiritual miracles—the work of conversion. But the power of faith was not limited to miraculous influence. Believing prayer was assured with the largest tokens of acceptance;³ and the rule of the distribution of the Divine favour was unchangeably established—“According to your faith be it unto you.”⁴ The life of faith, therefore, is the life of the Minister’s work, and the spring of his success.

¹ Mr. Scott remarks, in a letter to his son—‘I must be allowed to think, that we *have not* success, because we *ask not*, and do not stir up others to expect and ask the blessing from God only.’ Life, p. 393.

² Comp. Matt. viii. 2, 3. ix. 2. Mark xi. 22, 23. with Matt. xiii. 58. Mark vi. 5, 6.

³ Comp. Matt. xxi. 22.

⁴ Ib. ix. 29.

A confidence, indeed, that has no foundation in the Divine promise, is not faith but fancy. But the ground of Ministerial faith, is the engagement, purpose, and promise of God—“*The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this.*”¹ Much would be expected from this determined and fervid principle in human hearts, though so often misguided, disproportionate, and uncertain. But how overwhelming is the thought of this affection possessing the heart of God—of the deep interest of his infinite mind in the progress of the kingdom of his Son—his thoughts engaged in it—his unsearchable plans embracing it, and controlling all the mighty movements of the world to subserve this main design! How solid therefore is the rock, on which the Christian Ministry rests, as the grand engine for the accomplishment of the purposes and promises of God!²

The extreme difficulty of the exercise of faith is not however readily apprehended. Sometimes we see a sinking and faint heart, where better things might have been expected. Jeremiah’s case is most instructive to young Ministers—bold in public, but giving way in secret; full of compassionate weepings over the misery of his people, but “pressed above measure” under the power of his own unbelief.³

The habit of faith in the Christian Ministry requires peculiar simplicity to realize its full efficiency. The work is continually hindered by a dependence on our own resources; instead of constantly “receiving of the fulness” of our Head, who “hath the residue of the

¹ Isaiah ix. 7.

² Calvin remarks on this ground, that Ministers should go up into the pulpit to preach the word of God in his name, with that strength of faith as to be assured, that their doctrine can no more be overthrown than God himself.—Comment on 2 Cor. iii.

³ Comp. Jer. ix. with xx. &c.

Spirit," as the fountain and grand repository for his Church.¹ This spirit of self-dependence proves equal ignorance of ourselves and of our work. Who are we, to call to the dead, to arise to a new and spiritual life? Where is the quickening virtue, either in ourselves or in them? Where then is our hope of success, irrespective of our reliance upon Almighty power? The same lack of simplicity leads us to trust to hopeful appearances, rather than to the plain and repeated declarations of the Divine promise. We are ready to say of some bright momentary prospect—"This shall comfort us concerning our work:"² so that, when "we see not our signs:"³ or when, "as the morning cloud and the early dew," they have gone away, we are on the verge of despondency. Now if the promises were the *ground*, and favourable appearances only the *encouragements* of our hope, our minds would be preserved in an equipoise of faith, dependent and sustained under every variation of circumstance; "rejoicing in hope" amid the withering blasts of disappointment; and even "against hope believing in hope, strong in faith, giving glory to God." But from the want of a due recollection, it is more easy to exercise a personal than a Ministerial faith, though the warrant in both cases is the same; though the principle of faith is of equal power of application to every exigency; and though the training for the discipline of the Ministerial warfare is obviously one of the many benefits arising out of our personal trials.

The main difficulty, however, is not in the work of the Ministry, but in ourselves; in the conflict with our own unbelief, in the form either of indolence or of self-dependence. When faith is really brought

¹ Comp. Col. i. 19, with John i. 14, 16. iii. 34.

² Gen. v. 29.

³ Psalm lxxiv. 9.

into action, the extent and aggravation of the difficulty (even were it increased an hundred-fold) is a matter of little comparative moment. Difficulties heaped upon difficulties can never rise to the level of the promise of God. To meet the trembling apprehensions of weakness and unbelief—"Who is sufficient for these things?" the answer is ready—"Our sufficiency is of God"¹ There is a link in the chain of moral causes and effects, which connects the helplessness of the creature with the Omnipotence of God, and encourages the creature to attempt every thing in the conscious inability to do any thing; and thus "in weakness" thoroughly felt, Divine "strength is made perfect."² It is equally important to realize our abasement, and to maintain it with a corresponding and proportionate exercise of faith. Let us lie low—but let us look high; let us realize our own weakness and strength at the same moment; let there be a remembrance, as well as a present exercise of faith. The Apostle supported his mind under the pressure of his responsibilities, not merely by his general interest in the Divine sufficiency, but by the recollection of what it had wrought in him.³ This recollection will assure us of the sufficiency of Divine grace; and that, though the work immensely exceeds all human resources, the power and promise of God are fully equal, and faithfully pledged, to the exigency. No difficulty is therefore insurmountable. Our Master has invested the principle of faith with his own Omnipotence.⁴ The least grain will remove a mountain from its place.⁵ What then would not

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16. iii. 5.

² Ib. xii. 9.

³ Ib. iii. 5, 6—"who also hath made us," &c. ⁴ Mark ix. 23.

⁵ Compare Matt. xvii. 20. 'There are perhaps, but few Ministers of Christ,' (observes Quesnel on this verse) 'to whom, on their addresses to him in prayer, he might not answer; that

a large grain, what would not many grains do? If the weakest exercise is so mighty, what might not be expected from the habit of faith? Do we not see more beauty in the disciples' prayer, and more need of it in ourselves—"Increase our faith?"¹

But to apply its operations to the different department, of our work—If the Ministry be a spiritual employ, it must be conducted by spiritual principles. Faith, therefore, belongs to every part of it. It is the main-spring and the regulator: it enters into every wheel and pivot of the machine. The power or the want of it is felt at every single point, enlivening or paralyzing the work. Thus *in preaching*—how encouraging are the recollections, that we are nothing, but we hold the rod of God's power in our hand—that his presence is pledged to bless our word—and that our poor Ministrations of his all-powerful Gospel are the appointed means of gathering and edifying his Church!² It is faith also, that gives a tone of boldness to our public addresses.³ We cease to fear the face of man, when we realize the presence and power of God. Men of faith are the most successful preachers. Whitfield is said to have seldom preached without the seal of conversion to his message—Such is the effect of a simple reliance on the power of God! On the other hand, a cold formal preaching even of Evangelical truth is wholly unproductive, because it is without faith—And may we not also trace the barrenness even of an earnest Ministry to the same source—a want of practical conviction that the work is of God? Is there not sometimes a dependence upon our accurate expositions, forcible illustrations, the weakness of their faith is an hinderance to the conversion and improvement of souls.'

¹ Luke xvii. 5.

² See 1 Cor. i. 20.

³ Comp. 2 Peter ii. 5. with Heb. xi. 7.

ments prove the channels of spiritual strength to ourselves, and of spiritual blessings to our people.

It is most important habitually to contemplate the Ministry in its proper character as a "work of faith." It is faith, that enlivens our work with perpetual cheerfulness. It is no less necessary to perseverance than to success. While we find continual need of its increase, we feel that we could not hold on for one day without a measure of it. It is exercised in committing every part of our work to God, and in the hope, that even our mistakes shall be overruled for his glory—and thus we are relieved from the oppressive anxiety of unbelief, often attendant upon a deep sense of our responsibility. The sensible increase of peace with some of us results from growing simplicity of faith in casting ourselves upon God for daily pardon of deficiencies and supplies of grace, without looking too eagerly for present fruit. Hence our course of effort is unvarying, but more tranquil. It is peace—not slumber—rest in the work—not from it. Faith also sustains us under the trials of our Ministerial warfare: with the clear view of the faithfulness of the covenant, and the stability of the church. And indeed, as all the promises are made to faith, or to the grace springing from it—this is the only spring of Christian courage, and Christian hope. Unbelief looks at the difficulty. Faith regards the promise. Unbelief therefore makes our work a service of bondage. Faith realizes it as a "labour of love." Unbelief drags on in sullen despondency. Faith makes the patience, with which it is content to wait for success, "the patience of hope."¹ As there is no difficulty, that

¹ 1 Thess. i. 3.

(as we have hinted,) is not the fruit of unbelief; there is none, that will not ultimately be overcome by the perseverance of faith. If therefore we would gain an active and powerful spring of renewed exertion, we must strike our roots deeper into the soil of faith. For the work will ever prosper or decline, as we depend upon an Almighty arm, or an arm of flesh.¹ Few, probably, even of the most devoted servants of God, had *duly* counted the cost, before they put their hand to the plough; and it is the want of these preparatory exercises of faith, that occasions that oppressive faintness of heart, and gives the enemy such advantage in distressing our peace, and enfeebling our exertions. But after all, the grand secret is habitually to have our eye upon Christ, and our heart with him. And in this frame we shall find, that diligent labour and patient expectation comprise the spirit of the Ministry. Wait and Work are the two watch-words, not to be separated. Waiting will supply strength for work, and such working shall "not be in vain in the Lord."

But we must not forget to remark the supreme importance of the *Ministerial exercise of faith in its own character and office*, as substantiating unseen realities to the mind. The grand subjects of our commission have an immediate connection with the eternal world. The soul derives its value from its relation to eternity.² The preciousness of the Saviour is felt, in opening to the view, and assuring to the heart, a blissful prospect of eternity.³ The sufferings

¹ Many of us can feelingly enter into Brainerd's experience, both in his depressions and subsequent elevations.—'Oh! how heavy' (says he) 'is my work, when *faith* cannot take hold of an *Almighty arm* for the performance of it! Many times have I been ready to sink in this case. *Blessed be God, that I may repair to a full fountain.*'

² Matt. xvi. 26.

³ Job . . . 16.

of this present time are supported by an habitual contemplation of "things not seen,"¹ and by an estimate of the preponderating "glory that shall be revealed in us."² The vanity of this transitory scene is realized only by an accurate comparison with the enduring character of the heavenly state.³ Daily experience reminds us of the extreme difficulty of maintaining spiritual perceptions of eternal things. The surrounding objects of time and sense spread a thick film over the organs of spiritual vision, and the indistinct haziness, in which they often appear, is as if they were not. Now these momentous realities, vividly presented to the mind, are the principles of earnest devotedness to our work. 'Faith' (as Mr. Cecil admirably remarks) 'is the master-spring of a Minister. Hell is before me, and thousands of souls are shut up there in everlasting agonies. Jesus Christ stands forth to save men from rushing into this bottomless abyss. He sends me to proclaim his ability and his love. I want no fourth idea! Every fourth idea is contemptible. Every fourth idea is a grand impertinence.'⁴

We must also remark on the *personal assurance of*

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

² Rom. viii. 18.

³ 1 John ii. 15—17.

⁴ Cecil's Remains. 'He spake' (observes Dr. Bates of Dr. Manton) 'as one, that had a living faith within him of Divine truth. From this union of zeal, with his knowledge, he was excellently qualified to convince and convert souls.' 'We are so weak in the faith—is the greatest impediment of all. Hence it is, that, when we should set upon a man for his conversion with all our might—if there be not the stirrings of unbelief within us, whether there be a heaven and a hell—yet at least the belief of them is so feeble, that it will scarcely excite in us a kindly, resolute, constant zeal; so that our whole motion will be but weak, because the spring of faith is so weak. O what need therefore have Ministers for themselves and their work, to look well to their faith, especially that their assent to the truth of Scripture, about the joys and torments of the life to come, be sound and lively!'—Reformed Pastor.

faith as a spring of Ministerial effectiveness. "We are confident" (says the Apostle) "*wherefore* we labour."¹ The assured "knowledge" of Him, "whom he had believed," was at once his support under sufferings, and his principle of perseverance.² The persuasion "whose he was"—enabled him to confess with greater confidence—"Whom I serve."³ And who does not find, that "the joy of the Lord"—the joy of pardon, of acceptance, of communion, and of expectation—"is our strength"⁴ for our work in simple, affectionate, and devoted faith? The "spirit of adoption" converts toil into pleasure. What to a slave would be drudgery, to a child is privilege. Instead of being goaded by conscience, he is acted upon by faith, and constrained by love. "*Labor ipse voluptas.*" Thus faith is the principle, love is the enjoyment, and active devotedness is the habit of the work.

Upon the whole then, we may conclude this subject with the consolatory remembrance of the character of the gracious and faithful Master whom we serve. Every faithful Minister has fellowship with Polycarp's ground of support—"that he, who was constituted an *overseer* of the church, was himself overlooked by Jesus Christ." Our Divine Master will make us sensible of our weakness; but he will not suffer us to faint under it. Our store of sufficiency is treasured up in his inexhaustible fulness; while our insufficiency is covered in his compassionate acceptance. He engages to supply not only rules and directions, but ability and grace, for our momentous work. And if he enables us with a dependent spirit, a single eye, and a single heart, to make an unreserved surrender

¹ 2 Cor. v. 8, 9.

³ Acts xxvii. 23.

² 2 Tim. i. 12.

⁴ Neh. viii. 10.

of ourselves and our talents to his service, every apprehended difficulty will be overcome, and we shall “go on our way rejoicing” in our work. But the power of unbelief will be matter of daily conflict to the end. We shall probably find it our chief hinderance. It will induce a faintness under want of success, or self-confidence under apparent usefulness ; in either case inverting the Scripture order of life and comfort, and leading us to “walk” by sight, not “by faith ;” so that the Saviour (as we before hinted) cannot do *many* mighty works among us, *because of our unbelief.*”¹

The Writer submits this extended detail to his brethren, under the painful conviction of its application to himself ; and with a strong persuasion, that the hinderances alluded to are most prejudicial to our public usefulness. The most Scriptural church is materially weakened by mal-administration. Even the Jewish church, though of Divine origin, was paralyzed by the unfaithfulness of its ministers. And who can tell the injury, that our own admirable Establishment may sustain from unworthy Ministers entering into her service—as the way to respectability or emolument, instead of being inwardly “moved by the Holy Ghost,” and supremely seeking the honour of their Master, and the interests of his church ? The main secret of Ministerial success doubtless is, to bring the spirit and unction of the Gospel into our public and private Ministrations. The Writer would take, therefore, the excellent advice of Bishop Burnet—‘more

¹ Matt. xii. 58. Mark vi. 5, 6. ut supra.

particularly to examine himself, whether he has that soft and gentle, that meek and humble, and that charitable and compassionate temper, which the Gospel does so much press upon all Christians; that shined so eminently through the whole life of the blessed Author of it; and which he has so singularly recommended to all his followers; and that has in it so many charms and attractives, which do not only commend those who have these amiable virtues; but (which is much more to be regarded) they give them vast advantages in recommending the doctrine of our Saviour to their people.¹ Indeed the want of this Christian consistency obscures to our people the credentials of our Divine commission. For though we may find it expedient confidently and successfully to vindicate the lawfulness of our ecclesiastical call; yet it is the faithfulness, humility, constancy, self-denial, and tenderness of our Ministrations, that will chiefly lead them “so to account of us, as the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God.”² Bishop Burnet mentions the wise counsel given to him at an early period of his Ministry—to combine with the Ecclesiastical study of the primitive church, a view of the solemn sense of Ministerial obligation, almost universally entertained at that time; conceiving ‘that the argument in favour of the Church, however clearly made out, would never have its full effect upon the world, till we could show a primitive spirit in our administration, as well as a primitive pattern for our constitution.’ ‘This advice’ (adds the Bishop) ‘made even then a deep impression on me; and I thank God, the sense of it has never left me in

¹ Pastoral Care, chap. vii.

² 1 Cor. iv. 1.

the whole course of my studies.'¹ Indeed every pastor must feel, that the regard and confidence of his people materially depend upon the general consistency of his character. They naturally "seek this proof of Christ speaking in us,"² to draw them to us with something of the impression, with which "A Master in Israel" approached his Divine Teacher—"We know, that thou art a Teacher come from God."³ Whenever therefore we see a Minister specially honoured in his work, we shall mark him generally to be distinguished by a spiritual standard of profession, and Christian consistency of conduct. And doubtless with more spiritualized affections, with greater abstraction from the world, with more fervent love to the Saviour and zeal for his cause, with a higher estimate of the value of souls, and with a more habitual determination to live with and for God—we shall have a clearer testimony in the hearts of our people, that Satan would never be able to gainsay or resist. We shall "magnify our office"⁴ among them; and they will gladly receive us as angels of God, even as Christ Jesus."⁵

¹ Pastoral Care, chap. iv. Nearly to the same purpose he remarks in another place—'Maintaining arguments for more power than we have, will have no effect; unless the world see, that we make a good use of the authority already in our hands. It is with the Clergy as with Princes. The only way to keep the prerogative from being uneasy to their subjects, and being disputed, is to manage it wholly for their good and advantage. Then all will be for it, when they find it is for them. Let the Clergy live and labour well, and they will feel as much authority will follow, as they will know how to manage well. They will never be secured or recovered from contempt, but by living and labouring as they ought.' Conclusion of the History of his own times.

² 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

³ John iii. 2.

⁴ Rom. xi. 13.

⁵ Gal. iv. 14.

PART IV.

**THE PUBLIC WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN
MINISTRY.**



PART IV.

THE PUBLIC WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE Public Ministry of the Word is the most responsible part of our work—the most extensive engine of Ministerial operation—acting—not, like parochial visitations, upon individual cases—but with equal power of application to large numbers at the same moment. Baxter therefore justly remarks it to be ‘a work, that requireth greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal, than any of us bring to it.’¹ It well deserves therefore a prominent and detailed consideration in passing over the Ministerial field, though a full discussion of its several particulars would furnish ample materials for a volume.

CHAPTER I.

THE INSTITUTION AND IMPORTANCE OF THE ORDINANCE OF PREACHING.

‘BECAUSE therefore want of the knowledge of God is the cause of all iniquity amongst men, as contrariwise the ground of all our happiness, and the seed of whatsoever perfect virtue groweth from us, is a right opinion touching things Divine; this kind

¹ Reformed Pastor.

of knowledge we may justly set down for the first and chiefest thing, which God imparteth unto his people; and our duty of receiving this at his merciful hands, for the first of those religious offices, wherewith we publicly honour him on earth. For the instruction therefore of all sorts of men to eternal life it is necessary, that the sacred and saving truth of God be openly published unto them. Which open publication of heavenly mysteries is by an excellency termed preaching.¹ This institution belonged to the Jewish œconomy. Moses received his commission from the hands of God for the express purpose of the public instruction of the people;² and, when himself unequal to this work alone, seventy elders were set apart by Divine authority for his assistance.³ Traces of this institution are discovered in the history of the chosen people, during the reign of their kings. It was expressly revived after the captivity, nearly according to the present mode;⁴ which marks the decent ceremonial of the occasion, its simplicity, deep solemnity, and peculiar adaptation for the purpose of instruction. Our Lord, as the Great Preacher of righteousness, employed this institution for his public work.⁵ The Apostles allude to it historically as an early standing ordinance in the Church,⁶ and used it as the medium of the communication of their Divine message.⁷ Bingham shows it to have been continued in the Church, though with some interruption, from the primitive ages;⁸ and it is now established as the grand mean of uplifting the standard, and blowing the trumpet, of the Gospel throughout the world.

¹ Hooker, Book v. 18.

² Num. xi. 16, 24, 25.

³ Luke iv. 16—21.

⁴ Acts v. 20, 21.

⁵ Exod. xxiv. 12.

⁶ See Neh. viii. 4—8.

⁷ Acts xv. 21.

⁸ See his Antiquities.

The Ministry of our Lord illustrates the importance of this institution. It was the work for which he was anointed¹—in which he was constantly employed²—and for which he ordained his Apostles³—first with a limited,⁴ afterwards with an universal⁵ commission.

In conformity to this commission and to their Master's example—"daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ;"⁶ and in enlarging the field of their labours among the Gentiles, they contemplated nothing short of the accomplishment of their Master's design, in the preaching of the Gospel "unto every creature which is under heaven."⁷

The purpose of God has constituted this ordinance the main instrument in the work of salvation.⁸ That is said of preaching, which is said of no other department of the work. Neither the administration of the sacraments—nor the private reading of the Scriptures—nor the habit of secret prayer have the same stamp of Divine efficiency. In the ordinary course of means it is of supreme necessity—"How shall they hear"—so as to believe—call upon the Lord—and be saved—"without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."⁹

¹ Luke iv. 18, 43.

² Ib. xix. 47.

³ Mark iii. 14.

⁴ Matt. x. 5, 6.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 47.

⁶ Acts v. 42.

⁷ Col. i. 23.

⁸ Comp. 1 Cor. i. 17, 18, 21. 'Prædicatio verbi est medium gratiæ divinitus institutum, quo res regni Dei publice et explicantur et applicantur populo ad salutem et ædificationem.' Bowles' Pastor Evangelicus. 1655. Lib. ii. c. i.—a scarce work of the highest value, as giving a serious, important, and detailed exposition of the Christian Ministry.

⁹ Rom. x. 14—17. Archbishop Grindal in his celebrated remonstrance to Queen Elizabeth, upon her restraint upon his preaching exercises, well points out the supremacy of preaching

This view of the importance of preaching as the grand ordinance of God is confirmed by an able writer of the present day—‘Of all methods for diffusing religion, preaching is the most efficient. All other methods are indirect and preparatory; but the simple proclaiming of the Gospel has in all ages been attended with the most transforming efficacy; elevating the few, who have cordially accepted it, into a higher and happier state of being; and even raising the many who have rejected it into a better system of moral opinion. It is to preaching that Christianity owes its origin, its continuance, and its progress; and it is to itinerating preaching (however the ignorant may undervalue it) that we owe the conversion of the Roman world from Paganism to primitive Christianity; our own freedom from the thralldom of Popery, in the success of the Reformation; and the revival of Christianity at the present day from the depression, which it had undergone, owing to the prevalence of infidelity and of indifference. Books, however excellent, require at least some previous interest on the part of the person, who is to open and to peruse them. But the preacher arrests that attention, which the written record only invites; and the living voice, and the listening numbers heighten the impression by the sympathy and enthusiasm which they excite; the reality, which the truths spoken

in the Christian Ministry—‘Public and continual preaching of God’s word is the ordinary means and instrument of the salvation of mankind. St. Paul calls it “the Ministry of reconciliation” of man unto God. By preaching of God’s word, the glory of God is enlarged, faith is nourished, and charity is increased. By it the ignorant is instructed, the negligent exhorted and incited, the stubborn rebuked, the weak conscience comforted, and to all those that sin of malicious wickedness, the wrath of God is threatened.’ The whole of this letter is most admirable. It may be seen in Fuller’s Church History, Book ix. and in Strype’s Life of Grindal.

possess in the mind of the speaker, is communicated to the feelings of the hearers ; and they end in sharing the same views, at least for the moment, and in augmenting each other's convictions.'¹

The judgment of the fathers of the church was in strict consonance with this view of our subject. Gregory Nazianzen insists upon preaching, as 'the principal thing that belongs to us Ministers of the Gospel.'² St. Augustine marks it as the proper office of a bishop to preach.³ No congregation in the primitive church separated, without being 'fed' (as Tertullian expresses it) 'with holy sermons.' Bishop Stillfleet proves the conviction of the importance of preaching even in the dark ages of Popery, by an edict of the reign of Henry III, at a provincial synod, enjoining all parish priests 'to instruct the people committed to their charge, and to feed them with the food of God's word ;' the synod styling them, in the event of their neglecting this duty, 'dumb dogs.'⁴ Erasmus, in making a comparison between the several offices of the Ministry, gives the pre-eminence to preaching—speaking of the Minister—as 'then in the very height of his dignity, when from the pulpit he feeds the Lord's flock with sacred doctrine.'⁵ Mr. Thorndike (a writer of some authority on ecclesiastical matters) justly remarks—'that preaching in respect

¹ Douglas's Advancement of Society in Knowledge and Religion. A yet more excursive view is thus forcibly given by an anonymous writer—'The Pulpit, whether we view it with the eye of a Legislator, watching for the welfare of the state ; of the Learned, jealous for public science and taste ; of the Moral Philosopher, anxious for the virtue of the community ; or of the devout Christian, weighing every thing in the balance of eternity—the Pulpit must, in every light, appear an object of vast importance.' Eclectic Review.

² *πρωτον των ημετερων*. Orat. I. ³ De Offic. 1. c. 1.

⁴ Duties and Rights of the Parochial Clergy, p. 15.

⁵ Erasm. Eccles. Lib. i.

of personal performance, is the most excellent work bishops and presbyters are able to do in the service of God.’¹ Hooker gives his judgment to the same purport—‘So worthy a part of Divine service we should greatly wrong, if we did not esteem preaching as the blessed ordinance of God—sermons as keys to the kingdom of heaven, as wings to the soul, as spurs to the good affections of man, unto the sound and healthy as food, as physic unto diseased minds.’² It was remarked of Mr. Robinson of Leicester—that ‘to preaching he always assigned the throne in the various and distinct offices of his Ministry. “Preach the word”—this he considered as the main article of his commission, which the nearest of the rest followed at a long interval. ‘It is well’ (he would say) ‘to visit; it is well to show kindness; to make friendly; to instruct at home; to instruct at their own houses; to educate the children; to clothe the naked. But the pulpit is the seat of usefulness; souls are to be converted and built up there; no exertion must be allowed, which may have the effect of habitually deteriorating this—whatever else is done should be with the design and hope of making this more effective.’³

The historical review of this ordinance is interesting from its connexion with national prosperity, and the extension of scriptural knowledge and holiness. Asa was reminded by his prophet, that the destitution of “a teaching priest” was marked by a time of national distress and “vexation.”⁴ In the subsequent reign of Jehoshaphat, we find the mission of Levites and Priests throughout all the cities, combined with the overflowing

¹ See his *Due Way of composing Differences*.

² Book v. 22.

³ *Vaughan's Life of Robinson*, p. 297.

⁴ 2 Chron. xv. 3, 5.

prosperity and establishment of the kingdom.¹ The comparative disuse of preaching was a concomitant mark of the dark ages of Popery, while its revival was coeval with the dawn and progress of the Reformation.

The object of the Reformers in completing the *Book of Homilies*, was to remove the obstruction to preaching, from the ignorance of the Clergy. Erasmus (as we have seen) appears to have been sensible of the importance of preaching. Bishop Stillingfleet notices his observation in his *Ecclesiastes*, that the sense of religion grows very cold without preaching; and that the Countess of Richmond (King Henry the Seventh's mother) 'had such a sense of the necessity of that office in those times, that she maintained many preachers at her own charges, and employed Bishop Fisher to find out the best qualified for it.'² The Council of Trent also designates this office with considerable emphasis, as the chief part of the Bishop's work.³

There appears therefore just ground for George Herbert's beautiful definition of his Country Parson's pulpit as 'his joy and his throne.'⁴ It is, indeed, invested with a dignity, solemnity, and efficiency peculiar to itself.

CHAPTER II.

PREPARATION FOR THE PULPIT.

How honourable was the spirit of "the man after God's own heart," who could not endure the thought

¹ 2 Chron. xvii. 5—12.

² Stillingfleet, ut supra, p. 206.

³ *Prædicatio Evangelii* est præcipuum Episcoporum munus. Sess. v. Caput. 2.

⁴ *Country Parson*, ch. vii.

of offering unto the Lord his God “of that which did cost him nothing;”¹ and who, in the contemplation of the greatness of the work, and the majesty of his God, “prepared with all his might,” and consecrated all his treasures, and all his service, “for the house of his God!”² Nor did his illustrious son devote less preparation of heart and consecration of service to the building of the spiritual temple, than to that magnificent material temple, which was the glory of his nation, and the wonder of the world. To the one he devoted all the treasures of his kingdom; to the other, all the riches of his mind—“large and exceeding much, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.”³ It is said, that, “because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, *he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs*”⁴ as if his whole soul was engaged in the discovery of the best mode—as well as the best substance of instruction; that his heavenly expressions might be clothed in suitable language, worthy of the great subject and its divine Author. Though he found “much study a weariness to the flesh,” yet he considered its advantages greatly to overbalance its toil; and, though the wisest of men, his sermons were the results of labour and study, as well as the exercise of his natural and spiritual gifts. Thus were they—“as the words of the wise, goads” to stir the slothful to their duty—not only gaining the ear, and moving the affections; but fixing upon the memory, conscience, and judgment, “as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.”⁵

Such an example of serious and diligent preparation

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

² 1 Chron xxix. 1—6.

³ 1 Kings iv. 29.

⁴ Eccl. xii. 9.

⁵ Eccles. xii. 10—12.

for public instruction it well becomes us to follow. For, indeed, to habituate the mind to a constant recollection of the specific necessities of our people ; to decide upon the most suitable course of scriptural doctrine, exhortation, and comfort ; to select the most appropriate vehicles for the presentment of the truth—these are exercises of laborious and persevering diligence. Yet some will hold the necessity of pulpit preparation in very light esteem. A Bible and Concordance, with a few sermon-notes, or even the excitement of the moment, with the gift of tolerable fluency—these are thought a sufficient warrant to stand up in the name of the great God. That which is solid, however, will alone be permanent. No powers of imagination, natural eloquence, or vehement excitement, can compensate for the want of substantial matter. The “pastors after God’s own heart feed the people *with knowledge and understanding.*”¹ But except there be a gathering proportionate to the expenditure, there can be no store of knowledge and understanding laid in for themselves ; and consequently none for distribution to the nourishment of the people.

Preachers of this stamp are known by their general want of variety. It is substantially not only (what it ought always to be) the same doctrine, but nearly the same sermon—with a constant change of texts, but

¹ Jer. iii. 15. See the conclusion of Fenelon’s First Dialogue on Eloquence. ‘Preaching’ (says an old writer) ‘is not a labour of the lips, and an idle talk of the tongue from a light imagination of the mind ; but is indeed an uttering of God’s truth from a serious meditation of the heart, in sound judgment, acquired through God’s blessing by diligent labour and study to profit God’s people. This preaching is of worth, deserves esteem, procures credit to God’s ordinance, will work upon the hearers, and will pierce deeply, as being spoken with authority.’ Bernard’s Faithful Shepherd, 12mo. 1621.

with very few new ideas—*semper eadem*. Unlike the wise householder, they have no “treasure,” out of which “to bring forth things new and old.”¹ The “old” indeed always comes forth; but where is the “new?” Nor can this poverty of thought be justly chargeable upon their resources. For there is no characteristic of Scripture more striking, than the constant variety of lights in which it presents one unvarying object. Such exercises are equally barren in interest and impression. Either the torpor of the Minister spreads to his congregation; or the more intelligent part of them give vent to their feelings of painful dissatisfaction and regret.²

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

² The example of Bishop Jewell, offers much instruction to this class of preachers. His Biographer writes—‘The more eminent he was in dignity, the more diligent in the work of the Ministry—not so much in frequent as in exquisite teaching. For, though his sermons were very frequent, yet they were always rare for the matter and manner of his delivery. The Roman orator tells us of *negligentia quædam diligens*—a certain negligent diligence and learned ignorance, when the speaker carefully shunneth all affectation of art, and laboureth that his speech may not seem elaborate. But the sober and discreet hearer hath often cause to complain of a *diligentia quædam negligens*—a negligent kind of diligence, in many popular preachers, who ascend frequently into the pulpit, but with extemporary provision, are often in travail but without pain; and delivered of nothing for the most part but empty words: as if sermons were to be valued by the number and not by the weight. These men’s sermons, though they exceed the hour in length, and the days of the week in number, yet they themselves lie open to the curse of the prophet, denounced against all those “that do the work of the Lord negligently.” From all the danger of which malediction Jewell was freest of all his parts and place. For though he might best of any presume in this kind upon his multiplicity of reading, and continual practice of preaching, yet never would he preach in the meanest village, without precedent meditation, and writing also the chief heads of his sermons.’ Featley’s Life of Bishop Jewell. Comp. Mr. Cecil’s own account of the manner of commencing his Ministry—in his Life, prefixed to ‘Remains.’ This was the complaint in Jerome’s time—‘Sola Scripturarum ars est, quam sibi passim omnes vendicant. Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc universi præsumunt, lacerant, docent

It is indeed a "neglect of the gift of God that is in us," to trifle either in the study or in the pulpit. God will bless our endeavours—not our idleness. Our best thoughts and most careful studies are due to the work of the pulpit. To venture upon it with slender and imperfect furniture, argues but a slight feeling of Ministerial responsibility. Admitting that some gifted Ministers may preach warmly and accurately without study; yet reverence for our Master's name, and a proper consideration of the dignity and solemn business of the pulpit, might well serve to repress a rash and undigested exercise of this holy Ministry. How unequal to the exigency is the gathering of a few naked and unconnected truths, without weighing the most forcible modes of application to the consciences and varied circumstances of our people!¹ Loose declarations are the result of inexcusable indolence, and have no countenance from the Scriptural model of setting forth Divine truth. Our Master and our people for our Master's sake, have a just claim to our best time, and to the most profitable application of all our talents in their service. The sustaining exercise of faith will be realized in diligent preparation; but in wilful neglect we can expect only the merited recompense of our presumption.

The style, arrangement, and substance of the sermons of the most eminent preachers prove their

antequam discunt.'—Epist. ad Paulin. Even the heathen epigrammatist remarked—

' Si duri puer ingeni videtur,

Præconem facias.'

Mart. l. 5. Epig. 56.

¹ ' We must' (as Baxter reminds us) ' study how to convince and get within men, and how to bring each truth to the quick, and not leave all this to our extemporary promptitude, unless in cases of necessity. Experience will teach, that men are not made learned or wise without hard study and unwearied labour and experience.'—Reformed Pastor.

diligence in the work of pulpit preparation. President Edwards' high reputation as a preacher arose from his great pains in composition, especially in his early Ministry.¹ Philip Henry, in the latter period of his Ministry, would say—'that he might now take a greater liberty to talk, as he called it, in the pulpit—that is, to speak familiarly to people. Yet *to the last he abated not in this preparation for the pulpit*'²—like the royal preacher in Jerusalem, who, in the decline of life "*still taught the people knowledge.*"³ It is however most important, that the tone of our

¹ See his Life, prefixed to his Works, vol. i. 49.

² Life, p. 192. His excellent son's preparation for the pulpit was equally unremitting. 'To that leading object' (observes his Biographer) 'every other was subordinate. All he said, and all he saw, as well as the things he heard, were regarded by him with less or with more attention, as they bore upon *that*. Nothing crude or indigested found its way through his agency into the solemn assembly. 'Take heed' (he would say) 'of growing *remiss* in your work. Take pains while you live. Think not, that after a while you may relax and go over your old stock. The scripture still affords new things to those who search them. Continue searching. How can you expect God's blessing on your people's observance, if you are careless?'—William's Life of Matthew Henry, p. 112, 113. Eliot's view of the importance of preparation is admirable—'He liked no preaching, but what had been well studied for; and he would very much commend a sermon, which he could perceive had required some good thinking and reading in the author of it. I have been present,' (says his biographer) 'when he thus addressed a preacher just come home from the assembly with him—'Brother, there was oil required for the service of the sanctuary, but it must be beaten oil; I praise God, that I saw your oil so well beaten to-day. The Lord help us always by good study to beat our oil, that there may be no knots in our sermons left undissolved, and that there may be a clear light thereby given in the house of God.' And yet he likewise looked for something in a sermon beside and beyond the mere study of man. He was for having the Spirit of God breathing in it and with it; and he was for speaking those things, from those impressions and with those affections, which might compel the hearer to say—'The Spirit of God was here'—I have heard him complain—'It is a sad thing, when a sermon shall have that one thing—the Spirit of God—wanting in it.' Mather's Life of Eliot.

³ Eccl. xii. 9.

pulpit studies should be of a spiritual and experimental character. The materials drawn from intellectual sources, or from a lowered standard of orthodox theology, will be uninteresting, and inapplicatory—leading only into the outer courts of the sanctuary, instead of taking a coal from the altar, that the “ hearts ” of our people might “ burn within them.”

There may be, however, great injury in slavishly following any popular pattern. It is useful to observe the diversities of gifts in our brethren; but our chief business is with the discernment and cultivation of our own particular gifts, and the sedulous endeavour to acquire a competent measure of all Ministerial gifts, at least so as not in any part wholly to come short. Many young Ministers have crippled their energies and usefulness, by a vain attempt to exercise those higher qualifications, which they have marked in their more favoured brethren; instead of improving the more humble, but perhaps equally efficient, capabilities which had been distributed to them.

Yet does fruitful pulpit preparation depend more upon our spirituality than even upon our diligence. It is an improving and industrious habit, flowing from the heart penetrated with a sense of the love of Christ, the value of souls, the shortness of time, and the supreme concerns of eternity. Besides as spiritual things “ are spiritually discerned ”¹ when the mind is moulded into the subject of intellectual exercise, clear views of Scriptural truth are beautifully unfolded to the mind—no less subservient to personal refreshment than to pulpit instruction—while to a meditative mind the matter flows in perspicuous and natural order. Thus the spiritual disposition at once

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

realizes an accurate perception of the main object, and directs the studies to it with power of interest; so that, without this habit, the Minister, even with the most unwearied course of application, becomes a mere trifler in his momentous work.

But the general importance of this subject will justify us in considering it more in detail, under the three particulars of—Composition of Sermons—Habit of Meditation—and Special Prayer.

SECTION I.

COMPOSITION OF SERMONS.

How much responsibility attaches itself to the subject matter and the mode of our pulpit addresses! It cannot be of light moment, whether our people are “fed with knowledge and understanding,” or with ill-prepared and unsuitable provision. The pulpit is the ordinary distribution of the bread of life for their daily nourishment; and much wisdom indeed is here required, “rightly to divide the word of truth,”¹ that each may be ready to say—“A word spoken in season, how good is it!”²

In the selection of the subject matter of our public instructions, the Sacred Volume opens to us a field of almost infinite extent. To occupy the whole field is impossible. To seize the definite points, best adapted to the occasion, is the desirable object. The Apostle gives us some wise cautionary rules respecting our choice of texts and subjects—marking with equal distinctness “the things that are good and profitable

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

² Prov. xv. 23.

to men," and "the things that are unprofitable and vain."¹ He would have us avoid curious or speculative matters, as inconsistent with the design of our office, and unprofitable in their results.² He would have us "affirm constantly" the doctrine of man's ruin and recovery, as the sole efficient spring of practical godliness;³ and, after his own example,⁴ bend all subjects naturally to Christ, and concentrate them all in the full exhibition of his cross. Various sources for the direction of this system of instruction occur in the daily course of reading, in secret retirement with God, in the habit of family intercourse, in unlooked for, or even ordinary, providential occurrences. Subjects thus rising before us will always find a responsive interest in their adaptation to the present wants and cares of individual cases. Cases also in our parochial intercourse—of ignorance, of hardened obstinacy, of perplexity, or of awakened conviction—will furnish some of the best materials for our Sabbath Ministrations.⁵ This was Cotton Mather's excellent rule—to 'consider the case and circumstance of his hearers, as his means of direction to his subjects; and to have some particular design of edification in every sermon that he preached.'

The propriety of selecting texts merely as mottos for

¹ Comp. Tit. iii. 8, 9.

² 2 Tim. ii. 15, 16, 23. Bishop Reynolds warns us against a danger closely allied to this—'the vain affectation of finding something new and strange in the plainest texts, which shows pride and wantonness much more than solid learning or judgment.' Sermon on Self-denial, Works, p. 810.

³ Tit. iii. 8, *ita*—in order that—to the end that, &c.

⁴ See 1 Cor. ii. 2.

⁵ Blackwell notices, and profitably enlarges upon, the following particulars in reference to the choice of subjects. 1. The spiritual state of the people. 2. Their capacity for hearing the Gospel. 3. Their predominant sins. 4. Providential occasions. Meth. Evang. pp. 48—58.

pulpit dissertations may be questioned. The occasion of the discursive inquiry is perhaps taken from the text, but the text itself is left nearly untouched in its own place, without any exposition of its component parts, or of its connexion with the preceding and subsequent context. Vitringa justly observes of this method, that though it may afford, in some cases, opportunities for useful discussion; yet that it is liable to considerable objections, as tending to ‘divert the mind from the direct meditation of the sacred text, which is the true food of the soul, and the treasury of Divine wisdom; and to which alone the converting influence of the Spirit of God is annexed.’¹

In speaking of *the treatment of texts*, we may refer to some of Cotton Mather’s admirable rules for his student, such as the following—If possible—to read the text in the original, and consult commentators before he composed his sermon—to endeavour after a scriptural style in his sermons, and not commonly to dismiss any heads of discourse without some Scripture proof or illustration—to have much of Christ in all his sermons, as knowing that the Holy Ghost loves to glorify Christ; and hoping, that, if he followed this rule, the Holy Spirit would favour him with much of his influence in the exercise of his ministry—to crowd every sermon as full of matter as possible without obscurity.²

One or two remarks upon these rules may be allowed. The use of commentators is well before we compose our sermons, but not before *we have considered and arranged them*. This was Mr. Cecil’s plan of preparation; not to forestall his own views by the use of commentaries, but first to talk over the subject to himself, writing

¹ Vitri. Methodus Homiletica, cap. iii.

² See his Life.

down whatever struck his mind ; and—*after having arranged* what he had written, settled his plan, and exhausted his own resources—to avail himself of all extrinsical help.¹ The use of helps so as to call forth the native energies, and original resources of the mind, requires much consideration. There is no greater hinderance to solid learning, than to make such use of other men's resources, as to neglect our own. 'Helps for composition' in the form of 'Skeletons,' need great discretion, discrimination, and diligence, to employ with personal and Ministerial advantage, so that the proposed *helps* do not rather prove *serious hinderances* to composition. The Writer has been forcibly struck with the successful ingenuity displayed in Mr. Simeon's well-known and most useful work. The care and thought requisite to produce from his volume a complete and well-proportioned discourse, are fully equal to the labour of an original composition ; so skilfully are the breaks contrived to exercise the judgment in the suitable filling up of the vacuum, and arrangement of the scriptural matter in its proper place and proportion.² A mere copyist of the 600

¹ See his Life, prefixed to his 'Remains.' The following are noticed by a valuable writer as among the important advantages arising from foreign research, as supplementary—not preliminary—to home resources—'It will give excitement to the mind, and rouse it to a state of higher energy and activity—It will present ample materials for thought and reflection ; and should the mind fix, with a vigorous grasp, only on some one interesting thought, that single idea may be the first of a train, which will give a character and a value to the whole discourse—It will give additional amplitude, richness, and vividness to many of the illustrations, which your own mind might have suggested in part, but with much less power of exciting interest and impression—It will also serve to give additional confidence in the expression of your own opinion.'—Mental Discipline, by Rev. H. F. Burder, p. 85.

² This remark applies with less force to the *Horæ Homileticæ* of this revered writer, which, being constructed for the use of the laity as well as the clergy, came from the author's hands with more substance and completeness.

Skeletons would constantly transplant his people into the valley of dry bones, where the bones were both "very many and very dry." But a thoughtful mind would find ample and profitable employment in clothing the Skeletons, and exhibiting them fitted with solid matter, in the form of symmetry and strength.¹

A remark may also be made upon Cotton Mather's rule of crowding his sermons with matter. It would be well, that our discourses should be, like Elibu's, "full of matter;"² and we must regret, that a good man is not always a wise or a full man.³ Yet we must remember our people's capabilities as well as our own. Their digestive powers for the reception of food are limited, and it would be most injurious to stretch them beyond their healthful exercise. The principle of our Lord's instruction was, to "speak the word unto the people as they were able to hear it." Had he said all that he might have said, it would have been infinitely more than they would have been able to have received; and consequently the grand end of his instruction would have been lost. Such is the fertility of the field of Scripture doctrine, that consummate prudence is often required to select the most appropriate instruction. Mr. Cecil justly remarks,

¹ We might take as an illustration—Mr. Martyn's Sermon on Psalm ix. 17; which is the filling up of Mr. Simeon's Skeleton on that text. It was worked out (as we accidentally learn from his life) under circumstances of peculiar disadvantage and mental agitation. But the life that is infused throughout, the variety of its enlargements, the accuracy of the proportions of its several parts, the skill with which the breaks are completed, and the warm and strong colouring given to the whole—all combine to give it the power and effect of an original and talented composition. See his Life, pp. 130—132, and compare his volume of Sermons (v) with Helps to Composition, Skel. 387.

² Job xxxii. 18.

³ Archbishop Usher used to call Dr. Manton a voluminous preacher—not from the tedious length of his discourses, but from his art of compressing the substance of volumes of Divinity into a narrow compass.

that 'it requires as much reflection to know what is not to be put into a sermon, as what is.'¹ It is not desirable to aim at exhausting ourselves at every point of our subject. Let our thoughts be select, solid—such as will stand the test of scrutiny—such as naturally flow out of the discussion, and do not break into the unity of our proposed scheme.

So much, however, has been written upon the treatment of texts, by older and more experienced hands, that the Writer is almost ashamed to suggest any remarks of his own. It is probably better, that the sermon should not be planned, until the subject has been digested. We shall thus be able to preserve unity of design combined with interesting variety of method. We shall also guard against the common evil of dissecting our subject rather upon the principle of verbal than logical analysis; by which mode the words rather than the materials of discussion are distributed under their several heads, the primary topics are obscured, secondary points are amplified, and much irrelevant matter is brought into the scheme. In the actual composition, the exordium should embrace either some reference to the principles about to be discussed, or a preparatory view of the doctrines of the text naturally flowing from a clear exposition of the context.² In the body of the discussion, the clearness

¹ Cecil's Remains—'Verbum sic populo Dei dispensandum, ut multum, non multa. Prurit quandoque concionatoris animus, ut multa doctrinæ capita percurrat; sylvam materiæ in concione accumulæ. At nec hoc est ritè concionari, nec sic populus ædificatur. Maxima pars vulgi, quæ est ingenii hebetudine, multitudine rerum, quæ varii generis, potiùs obruitur, quàm instruitur. Non tam itaque refert, quot poteramus doctrinæ capita percurrere, quam, quid auditoribus commodum.'—Bowles' Pastor, Lib. ii. c. 10—'Qui docet, vitabit omnia verba, quæ non docent'—was Augustine's sensible rule. De doct. Christian. Lib. iv. 10.

² 'Exordium est ingressus quidam, quo ceu viam sternimus ad rem, quam tractaturi sumus; et quo de rebus non levibus,

of the method materially depends upon ‘having no more heads than can be sufficiently amplified within the bounds of the discourse, so as to be rendered sensible to the hearers. They should be quite distinct from one another, at the same time that they all centre on the main point.’¹ On the general subject, Claude’s *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*,² has furnished the chief matter of enlargement and discussion to those that have followed him. Some of his minuter points of detail, by the judgment of all, admit of improvement. But no work probably is more useful in moulding the habits into a thoughtful digestion of the subject matter, and a lucid arrangement of the materials of thought belonging to the discussion. And this, while it gives the hearer the greatest advantage in the apprehension of truth, enables him to retain it with the most permanent impression; ‘method being a chain, in which, if a man should let slip any one part, he may easily recover it again, by that relation and dependence which it hath with the whole.’³ Some of the best pulpit talents would be of no avail without

sed necessariis et salutaribus dicturos nos significamus, ad attentionem nobis conciliandam; quo etiam, in continuato textu, præautis loci cum præcedenti connexionem ostendimus. Bucani. *Methodus Concion.* vide p. 12. 12mo. Groning. 1645.

¹ Fordyce’s *Eloquence of the Pulpit*.

² Prefixed to Simeon’s *Helps to Composition*, and lately published in a separate volume, enriched with many valuable improvements.

³ Bishop Wilkins’s *Ecclesiastes*, p. 6. ‘Method raises a lively and beautiful composure out of a chaos of complicated and disorderly materials; and from a disorderly concourse and dark confusion of ideas calls forth light, order, and harmony. This assigns to every part its proper magnitude, figure, and situation, with so much judgment, that all stand in need of one another, and each contributes gracefulness and strength to the whole—Three things are especially necessary—distinction of the parts—their mutual dependence on one another and the perspicuity of the whole contexture.’ Sir Richard Blackmore’s *Accomplished Preacher*. 8vo. 1731.

a clear mode of communicating knowledge, in which education and preparatory study are too often deficient. Fluency of utterance, or fruitfulness of invention, without an orderly distribution of ideas, would fail in exciting the habit of attention, and lead to no definitive results. There may be indeed a danger, even on this side, of being too artificial in our mode; and lest our matter should become fettered by the restriction of canons, sometimes too accurate for the free and popular flow of Scripture.¹ It is however most desirable to avoid the habit of running away from our text, which has gained for some of us the name of ‘fugitive preachers.’ The most forcible matter is enervated by an unnatural connexion. The simplest subjects are obscured by the introduction of irrelevant detail.

Bishop Wilkins states the three component parts of a sermon to be method, matter, and expression. ‘Each of these’ (he observes) ‘do contribute mutual assistance to each other. A good method will direct to proper matter; and fitting matter will enable for good expression.’² The method will be shown in laying down the scheme—the matter in fitting it up—and the expression in clothing it with an appropriate garb. Having, however, already glanced at the importance of *method*, we proceed to mark the sources from which *matter* must be collected. The first of these must be a close analysis of every important word in the text, and of the design of the whole, illustrated by the examination of the parallel references, by an attentive ruminating inspection of the

¹ Augustine excellently observes—‘Periculum est, ne fugiant ex animo quæ sunt docenda, dum attenditur, ut arte dicantur’—Lib. iv.—ut supra—See some admirable thoughts on this subject in Hall’s Sermon on the Ministry, pp. 25, 26.

² Bishop Wilkins’s Ecclesiastes, p. 5.

context, and by an immediate reference to the analogy of faith.¹ This will of course form the ground-work of the sermon; as indeed it is the only definite way of discerning the real meaning of the message of God, and of guarding against the substitution of the word of man in the place of Divine instructions. In the separation of a text from the context, some notice of the historical circumstances connected with it—of the scope of the sacred writer—the successive steps, and consecutive reasoning, by which he arrives at his point—must be obviously important. Claude enumerates in detail the various sources, from whence matter may be elicited upon any given subject,² varying according to the different cast of the subject proposed. The *direct sources* are obtained from the immediate matter of the text, the consideration of the speaker, the circumstances of the occasion, the person addressed, the tracing of the principles developed in the text to their consequences, or consequences referred back to their original principles, the connexion and gradual approximation of means to their end, or the drawing out of the matter of discussion into practical and experimental improvement. An interesting variety of *collateral sources* may be drawn from parallelism, contrasts, illustrations, pursuing the subject in direct inference, objections, or hypothetical suppositions, &c. The exercise of a sound judgment in availing ourselves

¹ 'Concionem paraturus—textum ante omnia legat, relegat, perlegat; phrases seu locutiones, vocumque, tum singularum, tum complexarum, significationes accurate examinet; idque faciat, vel consultis ipsis fontibus, vel saltem omnium optimis laudatissimisque versionibus, unde sensum germanum eruat cum *περιστασι* loci, fidei analogia, et aliis Scripturæ locis convenientem.'—Bucan. ut supra. p. 10.

² They may be seen sensibly drawn out, and pertinently illustrated, in Sturtevant's *Conversations and Letters upon Preaching*; and in a subsequent work by the same author—'The Preacher's Manual.'

of these helps is as obvious, as is their effective use in due proportion, and under well-disciplined restraint.

But the Scripture is after all the grand store-house of the most valuable materials for our compositions. It was an excellent remark of an old man to Musculus, one of the Swiss reformers—‘*Si vis fieri bonus concionator, da operam, ut sis bonus Biblicus.*’ Dr. Watts reminded his Minister on this subject, that he was ‘a Minister of the Word of God, a Professor and Preacher of the Bible; and not a mere Philosopher on the foot of Reason, nor an orator in a Heathen school.’¹ There is no end to the diversified stores in this treasure-house. Whether we want forms of clear instruction, convincing argument, powerful or melting address, or even the higher strokes of eloquence, whether of a tender or awful character; we find here an unfailing supply of ‘thoughts that breathe in words that burn;’ so that, if there be a just complaint of the barrenness or the sameness of our preaching, it must arise from want of industry in our research—not from the want of variety or opulence of our resources. Augustine justly estimates ‘the preacher’s wisdom, according to his proficiency in the diligent and intelligent search of the Scriptures. The more he sees the poverty of his own store, the more needful is it, that he should enrich himself in these treasures.’² Not that we would recommend a long string of texts, or sermons chiefly composed of this substance—but a ready application of Scripture, after Cotton Mather’s plan, in confirmation of the distinct points of our discourses—often in the way of express reference, and yet more often in giving the substance and matter of Scripture. Something more is required than a retentive memory

¹ Humble Attempt, p. 64.

² Augustine, ut supra—Lib. iv. 5.

to refrain from overcharging our sermons,¹ and to dispose the proofs and references in their suitable place and connexion. Thus to draw the main strength from an accurate application of Scripture, confirms our statements with weight of Divine authority. On this account the Apostle's "speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom;" but he was careful to "speak in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," "that the faith of his people should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God."²

Perhaps the most accurate view of a pulpit composition would embrace the discussion of the doctrine of the text in two or more divisions—so clearly arranged, that the whole matter of the discourse has immediate reference to the several main heads of the subject—each division strengthened and illustrated by scriptural testimonies, connected by a short paraphrase, and applied in their various bearings upon the respective cases of our congregation³. If the length of discussion were likely to extend beyond its due bounds, it would be better to sketch a short outline in the introduction, or to seize the most

¹ It was Mr. Robinson's sensible judgment, 'that one or two texts were as good as one hundred.' A valuable old writer observes the defects on both sides—of loading sermons with a mass of Scripture, and leaving them wholly destitute. He remarks, that a judicious selection of Scripture proofs (seldom more than one to a single point) was the practice of Christ and his apostles, though they could have produced multiplied testimonies of Scripture in defending themselves against their enemies. Zepperi Ars Concion. Lib. II. chap. vi.

² 1 Cor. ii. 13, 14. Chrysostom well remarks—'If any thing be spoken without Scripture, the knowledge of the hearers halteth.'—On Psalm lxxxvi. To the same purport Augustine—'Non valet—hæc ego dico, hæc tu dicis, hæc ille dicit; sed hæc dicit Dominus.' Ad Vincent.

³ Three brief rules have been given by an eminent Master in composition—'Get the subject into your mind—Throw yourself into it—Pour both yourself and it into the bosoms of your hearers.'

prominent points of the subject, rather than to be constrained to press its personal interest upon minds ill-prepared by weariness to receive a deep and permanent impression. Care however will always be needed, lest our minds be so taken up with the mechanism of the sermon, as to forget that which alone can infuse life and power into it. We may produce a skeleton clothed with flesh, and exhibiting the most exact proportion of its several parts; yet still may it be, like the dry bones lately referred to, without the quickening breath and influence of heaven. Spirituality of mind will be most helpful both in the composition and the delivery of our discourses.

With regard to the *style of our sermons*—simplicity and point seem to be the most important characteristics—simplicity, without undignified familiarity—point and energy, without unnatural labour to produce effect. Against the two extremes of conciseness and prolixity connected with this style—Dr. Whately admirably warns us:—‘It is obvious,’ (he observes) that extreme conciseness is ill-suited to hearers, whose intellectual powers and cultivation are small. The usual expedient however of employing a prolix style, by way of accommodation to such minds, is seldom successful.—They are likely to be bewildered by tedious expansion, and being unable to maintain a steady attention to what is said, they forget part of what they have heard before the whole is completed. Add to which, that the feebleness produced by excessive dilution, will occasion the attention to languish; and what is imperfectly attended to, however clear in itself, will usually be but imperfectly understood. Young writers and speakers are apt to fall into a style of pompous verbosity, from an idea that they are adding both perspicuity and force to what is said,

when they are only encumbering the sense with a needless load of words. It is not indeed uncommon to hear a speaker of this class mentioned, as having 'a very fine command of language;' when perhaps it might be said with more correctness, that 'his language has a command of him'—that is, that he follows a train of words rather than of thought.¹

The sacred volume furnishes unquestionably the most finished model of this clear, natural, and vigorous style.—We may well therefore admit the propriety of Cotton Mather's rule—to mould even the garb of our sermons after the Scriptural pattern. Indeed the phraseology dictated by the Holy Ghost is peculiarly calculated for public preaching,² and forms the most attractive vehicle for the communication of religious truth. There is no book so intelligible as the book of God—no book that so clearly reveals man to himself, or that has such inexpressible power over his heart, or that connects itself so readily with his popular feelings and interests. The savour of Divine truth is sensibly diminished, by passing under the conceptions or expressions of men. No language—whether of exposition, address, or illustration—is therefore so generally acceptable and enlivening, as that of the sacred volume. Few readers of Saurin and French Divines of his class (orthodox in their views, and forcible in their statement of Scriptural truth), but have felt a lack of unction, warmth, and spiritual excitement arising from their scanty infusion of the sacred dialect into their writings—a deficiency for which no powers of genius or eloquence can compensate to a spiritual mind.³

¹ Whately on Rhetoric.

² See 1 Cor. ii. 13.

³ 'The Bible' (as a living writer admirably observes)—'being intimately associated in the mind with every thing dear and valuable, its diction more powerfully excites devotional feelings than

It is scarcely necessary to animadvert upon the pitiful practice of a copyist in preaching. Mr. Addison (a name of high authority in accomplished literature, but of little theological weight) commends Sir Roger de Coverly's Chaplain for having his list of sermons from the best Divines, ready drawn up in course for the whole year, adding—' I would heartily wish, that more of your Country Clergymen would follow this example ; and, instead of wasting their spirits in laborious compositions of their own, would endeavour after a handsome elocution, and all those other talents, which are proper to enforce what has been penned by greater masters. This would be not only more easy to themselves, but would edify their people.'¹ Such a system of idleness would doubtless be ' more easy to ourselves.' But the results of edification of our people are most questionable. Where the talent entrusted to us is thus " hid in a napkin," instead of being put out to daily use, what other stamp do we see upon the Minister, than that of an " unprofitable servant ? " ² Where " the gift is neglected," instead

any other ; and when temperately and soberly used, imparts an unction to a religious discourse, which nothing else can supply. For devotional impression, we conceive that a very considerable tincture of the language of Scripture, or at least such a colouring, as shall discover an intimate acquaintance with these inimitable models, will generally succeed best.' Review of Foster's Essays, by Rev. R. Hall. Vitringa speaks excellently to the same purport—' Non in sententiis tantum et doctrinis, verum etiam in dictis et phrasibus Scripturæ S. tantam vim et pondus esse, ut nullum verbum qualecumque aliud ei, in exponendis rebus spiritualibus sive *simplicitatis*, sive *proprietas* et nativæ significationis respectu, comparari queat. Vocabula et dictiones Spiritus S. nudæ, et nullis permixtæ lenociniis orationis aut exegesios humanæ, passim sic afficiunt et illustrant mentem, ut quicquid iis admiscetur, insipidum videatur.' Method. Homil. Dr. Watts, however, speaks of preachers, who ' have such a value for elegancy, and so nice a taste for what they call polite, that they dare not spoil the cadences of a period to quote a text of Scripture in it.' Improvement of the Mind, Part II. chap. vi. sect. iii.

¹ Spectator, No. 106.

² Matt. xxv. 25—30.

of "stirred up,"¹ what blessing can the Spirit, thus grieved and dishonoured, be expected to assure? It is to be feared, that Mr. Addison's conception of the power of a sermon was rather, as the magical effect of eloquence, or of moral suasion, than as the fruit of faith and prayer, connected in the ordinary dispensations of Divine grace with "the weak" and not the wise "things of this world."² George Herbert justly replies to the objection—'that where there are so many excellent sermons in print, there is no excuse for preaching bad ones.' 'Though the world is full of such composures, yet every man's own is fittest, readiest, and most savoury to him.'³ Indeed, it may be questioned, whether any course of sermons could be suited for general use. For, according to the different shades of ignorance or knowledge in different spheres,

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 14. ² Tim. i. 6. ³ See 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

³ Country Parson, ch. v. Bishop Sprat strongly reprobates this practice. Bishops Bull and Burnet however recommend it to the younger and uninformed clergy. The former suggests the use of Tillotson's sermons, the Homilies, or a section of the Whole Duty of Man. Clergym. Instructor, pp. 249—251, with 297, 298. Burnet, Past. Care, ch. ix. The Homilies indeed were compiled for the purpose of supplying popular instruction in the too frequent case, at that time, of clerical ignorance; and, as the genuine expression of the sentiments of our Reformers, they may be considered (with some allowance for the phraseology of the times) the best substitute for original composition. Bishop Wilson recommends, as a part of Academical instruction for Ministerial Students, the abridgment of some of the best practical sermons, marking the manner of handling the subjects, the ways of discussion, arguments; &c. justly observing, however, (as we have ventured to hint) that 'few discourses are nicely proper for any other place or circumstance, than those for which they were composed.' Works, iv. pp. 381—383. Perhaps compilation may be allowed in extreme cases, but not as the established rule. For where is the evidence of a Divine call to the sacred office in a total destitution of an important Ministerial qualification—'apt to teach?' Until a man 'is able to go without crutches, and work without patterns,' to use Bishop Burnet's illustrations) had he not better remain in the important character of a Christian student, until by prayer and study he should be able to 'purchase to himself a good degree' in the Christian Ministry?

it would be too elementary—or too full and enlarged—or not sufficiently systematic or detailed—and therefore in a greater or less degree inapplicable. Yet the injury arising from the slavish use of foreign resources does not imply the necessity, that every sentiment or sentence of our sermon should be (strictly speaking) original. The habit of reading will furnish many illustrations and trains of thought, which are insensibly moulded into our minds, and become our own by our individual method of application. Thus while we learn from all, we may almost be said to borrow from none. And what Christian student in the Ministry does not find this employment of composition both an useful exercise for his mind, and a means of grace for his soul? And what he has thus gathered in, as the fruit of his own study and acquaintance with his people's wants, and consecrated to the Lord in the simplicity of faith, prayer, and love, (*though perhaps not according to rule, and of very inferior substance*) will be sealed with the Divine blessing; while human dependence, sloth, and indifference, will be unvisited and unblest. We doubt not, but the weakest effort of our own mind is more acceptable than the indolent use of the most talented exercise of another; and thus, while we would aim high, and keep the best rules before us—every encouragement is given to “stir up the gift that is in us,” (*however little it may be in our own eyes*) while the excuse of want of ability is disallowed.

The importance of deliberate preparation for pulpit composition, is well deserving consideration. ‘If it is driven off late,’ (Mr. Cecil remarks) ‘accidents may occur, which may prevent due attention to the subject. If the latter days of the week are occupied, and the mind driven into a corner, the sermon will usually be

raw and undigested. Take time to reject what ought to be rejected, as well as to supply what ought to be supplied.¹ Dr. Hammond always had a subject in hand, and no sooner had he finished one sermon than he commenced another.² Though perhaps it would not be desirable to follow this routine without interruption, yet this habit of constantly turning our studies to present account, is of the first importance. It must ever be remembered, that though a lively imagination may serve an itinerant, yet that a stationary Minister, preaching twice or thrice in the week to the same congregation, must have furniture ready at hand; else will his sources be insipid, tautological, and unedifying—keeping back as babes, in elementary instruction, those, who, under a more digested administration, might have been “fathers in Christ.” The course, therefore, of suffering the week to draw to a close without most thoughtful anxiety respecting our Sabbath preparations, belongs far more to indolence or presumption than to any warranted exercise of faith. It may be doubted, whether it is not better to bring our old stores into fresh service, rather than to draw forth the new with indigested haste. At all events, a few hours at the close of the week, or the impulse of the moment of duty, in an ordinary way can furnish a very inadequate performance of this weighty responsibility;³ while a spiritual habit of conscientious diligence will be attended with encouraging tokens of Divine approbation.

¹ See his Life, prefixed to the ‘Remains.’

² See Fell’s Life of Hammond, a most interesting and instructive piece of biography.

³ Mr. Dod (an excellent old Divine) would say, that he had rather preach an old sermon ten times, than mount the pulpit without preparation. ‘God will curse that man’s labours, that is found in the world all the week, and then upon Saturday, in the afternoon, goes to his study: whereas God knows, that time were

SECTION II.

HABITS OF MEDITATION.

‘LECTIO inquiri—oratio postulat—meditatio invenit—contemplatio disgustat’—is Augustine’s distinction of the relative departments of pulpit preparation.¹ Not however, needlessly to multiply distinctions—the two last may illustrate the digestive habit of mind, without which, the results of study and composition will be, like undigested food lying upon the stomach, clogging and weakening the powers of action. Neither the memory, nor any other intellectual compartment, can be an useful storehouse for the reception of a confused mass of unshaped materials. There must be order and distribution to dispose the heap for purposes of practical utility. Composition, therefore, without a meditative turn of mind, will present only what has been tersely called ‘a mob of ideas.’ Or even under better auspices—being much more the labour of the head, and the exercise of the intellect, than any excitement of the moving springs of the heart, little benefit can accrue from it.

The want of this meditative habit is probably one

little enough to pray in and weep in, and get his heart into a fit frame for the duties of the approaching Sabbath.’ Preface prefixed to Shepard’s Subjection to Christ. See also Philip Henry’s Life, p. 61. Dr. Owen animadverted upon some ‘good men, so addicted to their study, that they thought the last day of the week sufficient to prepare for their Ministry, though they employ all the rest of the week in other studies.’—Sermon on 1 Cor. xii. 11. Of Mr. Strong, (an eminent Puritan Divine) it is told—that, ‘he made preaching his work, and was so much taken up in it, that he was often in watchings a great part of the night, besides his pains in his day studies.’—Preface to Strong’s Sermon’s, by Dr. Henry Wilkinson, Dean of Christchurch.

¹ Augustine quoted in Bishop Wilkins.

cause of the low and scanty character of religious knowledge among us. Valuable books are turned over, and the most striking and instructive passages noted down; while the digested analytical study of the subject matter is omitted, and the substantial food of the mind in this important exercise is lost. Every intelligent Christian must feel the defalcation of interest in his own mind, when the exercise of this habit has been slackened. It presents all the difference between the influence of truth passing lightly over his mind, or leaving a deep and permanent impression. In the one case the surface is barely swept. In the other case the bottom principles have been touched and called into action. What is merely glanced at in the mind is wholly uninfluential. There is no movement from the heart, till the exhibition of truth is by the habit of meditation clearly exhibited to the mind, set strongly and constantly in view, deeply pondered, and closely applied to the heart. This exercise of the mind will often supply the deficiency of extrinsic help, and increase its natural strength and fertility by constant excitement; while in no other way can it ever know the extent of its own capabilities. Much more also will be retained by this reflective habit, than could ever be acquired by the most diligent and extensive application of foreign resources. What is thus gathered being made our own, becomes a part of our own course of thought. It is, instinctively turned over and over again, apprehended in its connexion and dependencies with other trains of thought and principles of action, and thus successfully adapted to present circumstances.

No part of pulpit preparation is or ought to be merely intellectual employ. Meditation (to which we now refer) is a habit of spiritual intelligence exer-

cised on spiritual objects for spiritual purposes, fixing upon the mind a clear and permanent impression of divine truth. This habit is inculcated and vouchsafed as the immediate preparation for our public Ministry.¹ Indeed, one of the difficulties of the Ministry is this; that it requires the continual ruminating of spiritual subjects in our minds, in order that our minds may be cast into the mould of those truths, which we set forth before our people. The cultivation of this habit has so important a bearing upon the general efficiency of our Ministry,² that "the man of God," without it, cannot answer to the character of "a good Minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of sound doctrine."³ For (as Quesnel observes) 'how shall any one be able to nourish others with the word, who does not first nourish himself therewith? It is one thing for a man to enlighten his understanding, to fill his imagination, and to load his memory; and another, to nourish his heart with it. A man nourishes himself with it, if he lives upon it; and he lives upon it, if he changes it as it were into his own substance, if he practises it himself, if he renders it proper and familiar to himself, so as to make it the food and nourishment, with which he ought to feed others.'⁴

It is most important, that our successive pulpit preparations should increase our store of matter, strengthen our habits of thought, and direct us to the most effectual mode of communication. The

¹ Ezek. iii. 1, 2.

² 1 Tim. iv. 15.

³ *Ib.* 6.

⁴ Quesnel on 1 Tim. iv. 6. Owen Stockton remarks, as one of his chief encouragements for the Ministry, 'the benefiting of his own soul in his meditations for preaching. Whilst he was studying for others, the Lord made it a word of instruction for himself. And he found it the best means of growth, to be watering of others.' See his Life.

solid study of the best writings in the different departments of scriptural divinity, will furnish large employment for the meditative habit. In beating out the matter of our texts in the scriptural pages, exercise will be found for the most quickened and sharpened intellect. The result of a successful digging in this vast field will abundantly reward our toil, in the increasing strength, activity, intelligence, and joy of our faith. To the superficial student (if student he should be called) this is an unknown field. He has read for the exercise of his memory, and neglected the investigation of the meaning. ‘Much to be preferred’ (saith Augustine) ‘are those, who have had little care of retaining the words, and yet with the eyes of their hearts have beheld the very heart, of Scripture.’¹ ‘In the plainest text’ (as a good old writer observes) ‘there is a world of holiness and spirituality; and if we in prayer and dependence upon God did sit down and consider it, we should behold much more than appears to us. It may be, at once reading or looking we see little or nothing, as Elijah’s servant; he went out once, he saw nothing; therefore he was commanded to look seven times. What now? says the prophet: I see a cloud rising, like a man’s hand; and by and by the whole surface of the heavens was covered with clouds. So you may look lightly upon a Scripture and see nothing; look again and you will see a little; but look seven times upon it; *meditate often upon it*, and there you shall see a light, like the light of the sun.’²

Nor is the habit less important, in the *immediate* exercise of our public Ministry. It much assists our freedom, self-possession, and personal comfort in the

¹ Aug. De doct. Christian, iv. 5.

² Caryl on Job.

act of delivering our message, to have our subject matter inwrought, as it were, both in our head and heart, by spiritual meditation. It will also enable us pertinently to avail ourselves of any ready suggestions of the moment, and to engraft them into their proper place without hurry and confusion. Thus every way, the devoted concentration of the powers of our mind to the service of God will prove us to be "vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."¹ Suffer me, therefore,' (wrote Brainerd to a Ministerial student) 'to intreat you earnestly to give yourself to prayer, to reading, and *meditation on Divine truths*; strive to penetrate to the bottom of them, and never be content with a superficial knowledge. By this means your thoughts will gradually grow weighty and judicious; and you hereby will be possessed of a valuable treasure, out of which you may produce "things new and old" to the glory of God.'²

SECTION III.

SPECIAL PRAYER.

We cannot feel too deeply the importance of this part of pulpit preparation. To study and meditate much, and to pray little, paralyzes all. On the other hand (as Dr. Doddridge found by experience) "the better we pray, the better we study."³ Therefore (as

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 21.

² Letter ix. appended to his Life.

³ Orton's Life, ch. viii. Sect. 8. Again—'So it is, though it may seem a riddle, that when I pray and meditate most, I work most.'—Ib. Bishop Sanderson, speaking of prayer and study going hand in hand, observes—'Omit either; and the other is lost

Augustine admirably exhorts) ‘let our Christian orator, who would be understood and heard with pleasure, pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God, before he pronounce any thing. For since there are many things which may be said, and many modes of saying the same thing; who, but the Searcher of all hearts, knows what is most expedient to be said at the present hour? And who can make us speak as we ought, unless he, in whose hands we and our words are? And by these means he may learn all that is to be taught, and may acquire a faculty of speaking as becomes a pastor. At the hour of speaking itself the Lord’s words will occur to a faithful spirit—“Think not how or what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you.”¹ If the Holy Spirit speaks in those who are delivered to their persecutors for Christ, why not also to those who deliver Christ to learners. But if any say, that, if the Holy Ghost make men teachers, they need know no rules; it might be said also, men need not pray, because the Lord saith—“Your Father knoweth what ye have need of, before ye ask him;” and St. Paul’s rules to Timothy and Titus might be superseded.²

labour. Prayer without study is presumption; and study without prayer atheism. You take your books in vain into your hand, if you turn them over, and *never look higher*; and you take God’s name in vain within your lips, if you cry—‘Da, Domine’—and *never stir farther*.’ Sermon on 1 Cor. xii. 7.

¹ The application of this text to the subject may be questioned. See chap. v. sect. ii. at the beginning.

² De Doctr. Christian. Lib. iv. c. 15, 16. The following is the excellent advice of an eminent writer, who has never been suspected of enthusiasm—‘Sub horam concionis ecclesiastes det se profundæ deprecationi, et ab eo postulet sapientiam, linguam, et orationis eventum, qui linguas infantium facit disertas. *Incredibile dictu*, quantum lucis, quantum vigoris, quantum roboris et alacritatis hinc accedat ecclesiastæ.’—Erasm. Eccles. Pericles is said never to have ascended the rostrum without imploring a blessing

The most able compositions—the result of deep and meditative study—are essentially defective without prayer. They are the effusions of the head rather than of the heart—cold, spiritless, dead. And, however important it may be, that the preacher's head should be well furnished; it is of far higher moment that his heart should be deeply affected; that, drawing nourishment from his subject in the exercise of fervent prayer, he may bring it out to his people in fulness, simplicity, and love. Indeed, our office—employing us in the word and work of God—especially binds us to study our sermons in a devotional spirit. For it is thus only, that we shall receive a blessing from God to impart to our people. This alone will infuse life and interest into our message—not when it is set forth in human eloquence—but when its spirituality and unction savour of real communion with God.

A few distinct subjects for supplication will now be suggested, as forming a specific part of the preparation for the work of public instruction.

Direction in the choice of texts and topics should be sought from above. This was Cotton Mather's general rule; making more solemn supplication, before he entered upon discussions that would require several sermons, or undertook a large course of Scripture. Indeed, a habit of prayer is most important, as enabling us to receive any intimation from the circumstances of Providence, or the secret leadings of the Spirit, that may direct the mind to suitable and edifying subjects.

In the next step of *entering upon and pursuing our subject*, much matter for supplication will offer itself to the spiritual mind. Cotton Mather's course of pulpit preparation was, to stop at the end of every paragraph,

from his gods. Are there no Christian orators who may stand condemned by this celebrated Athenian?

in prayer and self-examination, and endeavour to fix upon his heart some holy impression of the subject. Thus the seven hours, which he usually gave to a sermon, proved so many hours of devotion to his soul, and a most effectual means of infusing life, warmth, and spirituality into his compositions.¹ By this rule we shall never preach a sermon to our people, in which we have not previously found a blessing to our own souls.

The *frame of our own minds in the pulpit* is another matter for distinct supplication—that we may “speak as the oracles of God”—that “a door of utterance may be opened unto us”—that we may have a special message to our people—that our hearts may be tenderly affected by their state—that our preaching may flow from love to their souls, and from hearts powerfully excited by zeal for our Master’s glory—that we may be assisted to deliver our sermons in a suitable frame, preserved from the influence of the fear of man, and with a simple, earnest dependence on the divine blessing—and that the Lord may preach our sermons to our own hearts, both in the study and in the moment of delivering them.²

¹ This practice he cordially recommended to his Student and Pastor. Math. Stud. p. 191—‘Orabit Ecclesiastes pro se, ut in suo ipsius animo vivam illam efficacem et penetrantem verbi divini vim experiatur et sentiat; ne videlicet ad ignem, quam aliis exsufflat et accendit, ipse frigeat; sed ignis ardens in suo ipsius corde verbum prædicatum fiat.’ Zepperi Ars Concion. Lib. iv.

² Our subject suggests the importance of prayer for assistance in the pulpit. But should not we remind ourselves in our preparatory exercises for our public work, that the same assistance is equally needed in the desk? No uninspired service contains so much mind or spirituality as the Liturgy. It is alike the service of our understanding and of our heart; and therefore the *energy* as well as the *devotion* of the spiritual habit must be exercised. Mr. Cecil considered, that ‘the leading defect in Christian Ministers was the want of a devotional habit’—a remark, that is too

The *power of our Ministry upon the hearts and consciences of our people*—as the main end of our labour, is too important to be forgotten. We need to pray for them as well as to preach to them—to bring our ministry before God on their account, and to entreat for them; that their attention may be engaged, and their hearts opened to receive our commission; that all hinderances of prejudice, ignorance, indifference, worldliness, and unbelief, may be removed; that the spirit of humility and simplicity, sanctification and faith, may be vouchsafed unto them; in a word—(to use the beautiful language of our church) ‘that it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.’

Nothing will give such power to our sermons, as when they are the sermons of many prayers.¹ Oh! then let us water our preaching with our prayers, if ever we would expect to reap the fruit of it. The best sermons, except they be thus watered, will be but lost sermons. How else indeed can any measure

often illustrated by the contrast of the monotonous formality of the desk with the fervid energy of the pulpit; as if the exercise of communion with God in supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving, in penitential self-abasement and faith, were less spiritual than the delivery of a discourse to our fellow-sinners. We wonder not *under such circumstances* at the listlessness, with which our Liturgical services are performed by the worshippers. The *mere reading* of the prayers has little power of exciting a spirit of prayer throughout the congregation. It is when they *are felt and prayed*, that the chord of sympathy vibrates from the heart of the Minister to the hearts of his congregation—“Arise, O Lord, into thy rest. *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.*” Psalm cxxxii. 8, 9.

¹ ‘Your work’ (said Mr. Shepard of New England, on his death-bed, to some young Ministers) ‘is great, and requires great seriousness. For my own part, I never preached a sermon, which in the composing of it did not cost me prayers with strong cries and tears.’

of Divine influence attend them? How can we expect to deliver a word from God, except, like the ancient prophet, we “stand upon our watch, and watch to see what he will say to us;”¹ speaking the word from his mouth, and committing it in prayer, faith, and expectation for his blessing? It is far more easy to bring our people the product of our own study, than to deliver our message to them with much assurance as from the mouth of God. But it is thus by waiting on God that we renew our commission from time to time, with a fresh sufficiency of grace for our work, and with a strengthened confidence of Divine success. Thus also we obtain that *καρρησια*, which flows into the heart from the unction of grace, and unties our stammering tongues to “speak boldly, as we ought to speak.”²

This waiting spirit of prayer implies the renunciation of all dependance upon our best preparations, Ministerial gifts, or spiritual habits, as wholly insufficient, to qualify us for the discharge of our commission. It implies also a simple dependance upon our Glorious Head for present supplies of his Divine influence. It can only be exercised in the spirit of “simplicity and godly sincerity;” when we are not—crying with Saul, to be “honoured before our people”—but desiring only “by manifestation of the truth to commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”³ The assistance which this spirit brings to our preaching is of the highest importance. Mr. Scott gives the result of his own experience on this point—*“The degree in which after the most careful preparation*

¹ Hab. ii. 1.

² Eph. vi. 19, 20. This was granted to the first apostles in an extraordinary measure, in answer to waiting and prayer. Acts i. 14. with ii. 1—13.

³ 1 Sam. xv. 30. with 2 Cor. iv. 2.

for the pulpit, new thoughts, new arguments, animated address, often flow into my mind, while speaking to a congregation, even on very common subjects, makes me feel as if I was quite another man, than when poring over them in my study. There will be inaccuracies: but generally the most striking things in my sermons are unpremeditated.¹ This testimony is familiar with the experience of many of our brethren, who in this spirit of prayer are often conscious of luminous and affecting views of truth, almost instantaneously presenting themselves to their minds. Nor does it countenance a relaxed system of preparation, (being warranted only in the use of the appointed means) while it encourages the acting of faith for present assistance, gives additional liveliness to our ministry, and brings down from heaven the warmest matter of our sermons at the time of their delivery.

The highest style of a Minister therefore is—that *he is a man of prayer*. Doubtless the best preachers in the church are those who most “give themselves to prayer.”² On this account some Ministers of inferior natural qualifications are more honoured than others of their more talented brethren.³ For sermons

¹ Life, pp. 393, 394. We would here venture to suggest the importance of a special reference to our work in the prayer before the sermon. If extempore prayer should be deemed inexpedient, yet different petitions might readily be collected into a short form, expressive of our entire dependence upon the Spirit of God for the expected blessing upon our work. This—as being a distinct and solemn honouring of the Spirit—we might hope, would command his Divine influence upon our service, while the sympathy excited throughout the Christian part of our congregation would give a large encouragement and warrant to faith. See Matt. xvii. 19; and Scott’s Life, pp. 392, 393.

² See Acts vi. 4.

³ ‘Vera ecclesiæ ædificatione administrandis nulla eruditio, eloquentia, et diligentia (quæ interim tamen divinissimæ hujus provinciæ omnibus modis necessaria sunt adminicula et instrumenta) sufficit: sed nauclero hic et præside opus est Spiritu Sancto, qui intellectum illuminet, cor et linguæ plectrum gubernet

obtained chiefly by meditation and prayer, are found to be "weighty and powerful;" while those of a far higher intellectual character by the neglect of prayer in their compositions are unblest. It is therefore upon good grounds, that the most eminent servants of God have given the preeminence to this part of pulpit preparation.¹

atque ignitum reddat, et animum viresque addat.' Zepperi-Ars Concion. Pref. 4, also Lib. ii. c. i. 16—18.

¹ It is stated of Mr. Bruce (one of "the excellent of the earth," in the troublous times of Scotland) that, though he was known to take much pains in searching the mind of God in Scripture, and though he durst not neglect the diligent preparation of suitable matter for the edification of his people, yet *his main business was in the elevation of his own heart into a holy and reverential frame, and in pouring it out before God 'in wrestling with him, not so much for assistance to the messenger as the message.'* The effect fully proved, that in his earnest endeavour to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, he laboured thereunto, striving according to his working, which worked in him mightily." Col. i. 28, 29. See an interesting account of Mr. Bruce, given in Fleming's Fulfilment of Scripture.

Mr. Spencer, of Liverpool, (a young Minister of extraordinary promise, prematurely, as we are led to think, though doubtless in mercy to himself, snatched away from the church,) is stated invariably to have passed from secret communion with God to what he described as 'that awful place'—a pulpit. Preface to a volume of posthumous sermons published by the Religious Tract Society. The uncommon interest and effect, which appeared to rest upon his Ministrations, were doubtless drawn more directly from his heavenly habit of mind, than from those unrivalled powers of pulpit eloquence, that commanded universal admiration.

Once more to revert to the practice of one, stamped by Mr. Southey with the name of 'saintly Fletcher.' Mr. Gilpin informs us, that 'his preaching was perpetually preceded, accompanied, and succeeded by prayer. Before he entered upon the performance of this duty, he requested of the Great "Master of assemblies" a subject adapted to the conditions of his people, earnestly soliciting for himself wisdom, utterance, and power; for them a serious frame, an unprejudiced mind, and a retentive heart. This necessary preparation for the profitable performance of his ministerial duties was of longer or shorter duration, according to his peculiar state at the time; and frequently he could form an accurate judgment of the effect that would be produced in public by the langour or enlargement he had experienced in private. The spirit of prayer accompanied him from the closet to the pulpit; and while he was outwardly employed in pressing the truth upon his

Massillon—after observing, that the want of prayer is the cause of the little good, which the generalities of Pastors do in their parishes—(notwithstanding they may exactly fulfil all the other duties of the Ministry)—adds ‘The Minister, who does not habituate himself to devout prayer, will speak only to the ears of his people; because the Spirit of God, who alone knows how to speak to the heart, and who, through the neglect of prayer, not having taken up his abode within him, will not speak by his mouth.’¹ Philip Henry thus wrote, upon a studying day—‘I forgot explicitly and expressly, when I began, to crave help from God, and *the chariot wheels drove accordingly*. Lord, forgive my omissions, and keep me in the way of duty.’² Indeed, as an old divine observes—‘If God drop not down his assistance, we write with a pen that hath no ink. If any in the world need walk dependently upon God more than others, the Minister is he.’³ We should recommend also care to be taken not only in the composition of our sermons, but in the preparation of our own hearts, for the delivery of them. Mr. Baxter recommends special consideration of the heart, *before we go into* the congregation. “For if it be then cold, how is it to warm the hearts of the hearers? Go therefore” (he recommends) “specially to God for life.”⁴

Nor must we forget the work of subsequent as well

hearers, he was inwardly engaged in pleading that last great promise of his unchangeable Lord—“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Gilpin’s Notes on Fletcher’s Portrait of St. Paul, p. 52.

¹ Charges, pp. 207—209.

² Life, pp. 60, 61.

³ Gurnal. ‘There must be the labour of study before Ministers preach’ (as he elsewhere observes) ‘the labour of zeal and love in preaching—the labour of suffering after preaching—and *always the labour of prayer, to crown the whole with success.*’

⁴ Reformed Pastor.

as preparatory prayer. This is in strict conformity to our Master's pattern, who, when he had taught the multitude, and sent them away, "departed into a mountain to pray."¹ Our work is not over, when our people are dismissed from the house of God. During our continuance in the pulpit, there was one as active as ourselves, and much more powerful, in incessant employ to intercept the passage of every word from our lips to its destined object. Nor will he be less diligent in seeking to undo what had been done in spite of his efforts, and what will easily be undone by his persevering subtlety, except as we are enabled to counterwork with continued watchfulness and prayer. Dr. Owen reminds us—'To preach the word, and not to follow it with prayer constantly and frequently, is to believe its use, neglect its end, and cast away all the seed of the gospel at random.'

We want to be as deeply concerned after the conclusion of our public work, as at our first entrance upon it. For is it not probable, that convictions have been awakened or strengthened by the stroke of the hammer that had been just uplifted? May not some cases of transient impression be charged upon our own consciences, that we had not laboured in secret to drive in the nail further, when it had once entered? Has not probably some soul received its first impress of Divine grace? These cases need our prayer equally with our counsel; nor would the one, disjointed from the other, be permanently helpful. On all accounts, therefore, 'a systematic delivery of the doctrines of the Gospel is essentially requisite to the formation and gradual developement of Christian principles; but it must be

¹ Mark vi. 34—46.

accompanied by many an earnest prayer for the effusion of some portion of that Divine grace, which, in primitive times, added to the church in one day three thousand souls.'¹ This exercise of prayer, though we have spoken of it as *subsequent* to the delivery of the word, yet is truly a part of *pulpit preparation*. For it is obvious, that by this exercise the mind is kept in the tone of the spirit of prayer, and ready for action upon the next preparatory occasion—Besides that the connexion of the prospect with the retrospect is so natural, that no supplication for a blessing upon the past would be unaccompanied with earnest desires, and warranted expectations of a continued and necessary supply. 'Be much in prayer to God,' (was the direction of an excellent Minister) 'thereby you shall find more succour and success in your Ministry, than by all your study.'²

We may conclude the subject of Pulpit Preparation with a few remarks upon the combined effect of the several detailed parts, and upon the precise measure of assistance, which we are warranted to expect in this work.

The sum of the details may be found in the practice of Mr. Mitchel, an American divine—'In the writing of his discourses for the pulpit, he did (as they say Aristotle did, when he wrote one of his famous books) *dip his pen into his very soul.*' When he was going to compose a sermon, he *began with prayer*; thinking—'*Bene orasse est bene studuisse.*' He then read over the text in the original, and weighed the language of the Holy Ghost. If any difficulty occurred in the

¹ Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 170. Compare pp. 91—93.

² Mather's New England, iii. 138.

interpretation, he was wary, how he ran against the stream of the most solid interpreters, whom he still consulted. He was then desirous to draw forth his *doctrines*, and perhaps *other heads* of his discourse, at the beginning of the week, that so his occasional thoughts might be useful thereunto. And he would ordinarily improve his *own meditations* to shape his discourse, before he would consult any other authors who treated on the subjects, that *so their notions might serve only to adorn and correct his own*. Lastly, having finished his composure, he concluded with a thanksgiving to the Lord his Helper.¹

This example aptly illustrates our view of the completeness of pulpit preparation—including careful study, close meditation, and fervent prayer, that we may set aside all crude and indigested matter, and bring forth from our treasure-house solid, and edifying food. However we may expect extraordinary assistance in extraordinary emergencies, yet in the ordinary course of our Ministrations, to produce what we have neither weighed in our minds, nor compared with the word of truth—is to “offer offerings unto the Lord of that which doth cost us nothing”—nay more—it is to “offer the blind, the lame, the sick,” and even “a corrupt thing, for sacrifice.”² Yet, however accurate our study of Divine truth may be, except we realize its holy impression upon our hearts, enter into its spirit, and speak from heart to heart, we shall lose our own part of our labour,—*the edification of our own souls*. How delightful is our pulpit labour, when we have a spiritual relish to taste a Divine sweetness in our message! The power of this enjoyment (alas! too seldom fully realized) is

¹ Mather's New England, iv. 205.

² 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. Mal. i. 8, 13, 14.

indescribable. We might almost take up Elihu's words—"I am full of matter ; the spirit within me constraineth me ; behold my belly is as new wine which hath no vent ; it is ready to burst like new bottles. *I will speak, that I may be refreshed.*"¹ This is something far above study and artificial means of excitement or improvement. It is the exercise of faith, the fruit of earnest persevering prayer, and accompanied with Divine energy upon our Ministry—enabling us "so to speak, that many believe."²

And thus are these habits of pulpit preparation (so fruitful in their influence upon our Ministrations) most beneficial in maintaining the sense of experimental religion in our own souls. And indeed this is a most important temperament in Christian Ministers—'that they should attend to the direction of conscience ; that they should mark the workings and convictions of the Holy Spirit, their exercises of mind, and the effects resulting from them ; that they should give their attention to the different changes in Christian experience, utterly unknown to men in their natural state ; that they should maintain constant communion with God by meditation and prayer, in order to obtain an intimate knowledge of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," and be apt to administer to the consciences of others, that they may escape the same censure, with which the Lord rebuked Nicodemus—"Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things ?"'³ The consciences of serious Christians discover the value of a sober and judicious Ministry, thus framed upon an accurate acquaintance with experimental religion. They feel themselves more soundly comforted by one discourse,

¹ Job xxxii. 18—20.

² Acts xiv. 1.

³ Vitr. Method. Homilet. cap. x.

woven and wrought out of a feeling heart, spiritually schooled in the exercises of the ways of God and the methods of Satan, supported and sinewed by the genuine expositions of the word of God, and enforced 'with the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit'—than from the more cold statements of orthodoxy, or the more abstract views of the Christian system, even though accompanied with exhortations and invitations. A high relish of Divine truth in the Minister naturally gives a great insight into human character; and enables him skilfully to exhibit the terms of his commission for the conviction of the judgment, and the touching of the heart and conscience. Nor would any other source supply him with those striking and affecting sentiments, which find a responsive voice in the consciences of the ungodly, and in the sympathies of humble and experienced Christians.

The maxim of practical religion applies in full force to the expectation of assistance in our public work, Labour in the preparation for the pulpit, as if our whole success depended on it. Pray and depend upon Christ, as feeling, that "without him we can do nothing." In neglecting preparation, we should tempt God to depart from his ordinary course for our assistance; in trusting to our preparation we should make a God of our gifts. It is more curious than important, to inquire into the modus of the assistance of the Divine Spirit in the composition or delivery of our sermons; or to endeavour to determine the precise boundaries between the result of our own thought, and the efflux from a higher source. But it will be safe to ascribe all the honour of the success to the Divine agent, and to attribute to ourselves all the infirmities attendant upon the work. We are warranted to expect Divine assistance to the utmost



extent of our necessity, and to lay our whole stress upon it, so as to be persuaded, that there can be no *effectual* meditation, composition, or delivery without it. But such a dependence as supersedes the necessity of preparation is unscriptural and delusive. Not that we must expect the assistance from above in the way of mechanical sufficiency, as purchased by a certain quantum or routine of preparation. After we have preached with power and acceptance for successive years, there is still no more security than at first; and no prospect of the continuance of the supply, except in the renewed exercise of faith, repairing to the overflowing fountain for fresh and enlarged supplies.

The sum, however, of all that could be offered upon this subject, cannot be given better than in Mr. Cecil's words—'I have been cured' (he remarks) 'of expecting the Holy Spirit's influence without due preparation on our part, by observing how men preach, who take up that error. We must combine Luther with St. Paul—'*Bene orasse est bene studuisse*'—must be united with St. Paul's—"*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all.*" One errs who says—'I will preach a reputable sermon;' and another errs who says—'I will leave all to the assistance of the Holy Spirit,' while he has neglected a diligent preparation.'¹

¹ Cecil's Remains. To the following humbling confessions most of us will subscribe—'In the preparation of our sermons, alas! how cold, how formal have we often been! Prayer has been the last thing we have thought of, instead of the first. We have made dissertations, not sermons; we have consulted commentators, not our Bibles; we have been led by science, and not by the heart: and therefore our discoveries have been so tame, so lifeless, so uninteresting to the mass of our hearers, so little savouring of Christ, so little like the inspired example of St. Paul.' Rev. D. Wilson's Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. xiii.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCRIPTURAL MODE OF PREACHING THE LAW.

THE mark of a Minister “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,” is, that he “rightly divides the word of truth.” A full and consistent application of the Gospel to the mass of our unconverted hearers, combined with a system of spiritual instruction for the several classes of Christians, constitutes the dispensation of the Christian Ministry. It will be distinguished by a Scriptural symmetry in the arrangement of Christian principles; embracing the whole revelation of God, in its doctrinal instructions, experimental privileges, and practical results. This revelation of God is divided into two parts—the Law and the Gospel—essentially distinct from each other, though so intimately connected, that an accurate knowledge of neither can be obtained without the other. The Scriptural preaching of the Law is therefore a main part of our subject. We shall consider it separately; and in its connexion with the Gospel.¹

SECTION I.

THE PREACHING OF THE LAW—ITS CHARACTER—USES—AND OBLIGATIONS.

THERE can be no question, that the preaching of the law in its Scriptural character and connexion must

¹ The reader may be referred to Mr. Simeon’s Sermons on Gal. iii. 19, in his Appendix to *Horæ Homileticæ*, for a most luminous exhibition of the Scriptural preaching of the law. Comp. Daven. on Col. i. 28: on the duty and importance of preaching the law.

form a constituent part of the Ministry of the Gospel. Some indeed, upon a contracted and inaccurate view, identify the preaching of the law with legal preaching. Others preach the law independently of the Gospel. Others again narrow its exceeding breadth, by bringing character and conduct to the criterion of some lower rules and inferior standard—such as expediency, the opinion of the world, prudence, and consequences. But, as there is a legal mode of preaching the Gospel, so there is an evangelical mode of preaching the Law. Luther's indignation was roused by the perversion both of the Law and the Gospel in his times. Propositions were brought to him, against the preaching of the law, because it could not justify. 'Such seducers' (said he) 'do come already among our people, while we yet live—what will be done when we are gone?' 'Never' (observes he) 'was a more bold and harsh sermon preached in the world, than that which St. Paul preached, wherein he quite abolisheth and taketh away Moses, together with his laws, as insufficient for a sinner's salvation. But when we are not in hand with justification, we ought greatly and highly to esteem the law. We must extol and applaud it in the highest degree, and (with St. Paul) we must count it good, true, spiritual, and Divine, as in truth it is.'¹

The Apostle combines his view of the character and obligations of the law with his most expanded views of evangelical truth. He defines its character to be "holy, just, and good."² He informs us that its lawful use is "good"³ for us. The exposition of this character, and the enforcement of this use, must

¹ Luther's Table Talk, ch. xii.

² Rom. vii. 12.

³ 1 Tim. i. 8.

therefore be involved in the terms of the Ministerial commission.

The *character of the law of God*, as the transcript of the Divine mind and image, 'is "*holy*," as presenting to man the love of God, and at the same time exhibiting that most glorious proof of God's love to man, which is the essence of his holiness—"just," as being conformable to, and deduced from, the first and most simple principles of justice between God and his creatures—"good," such a law as conscience tells us, is suitable to the character of God, is most useful for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose, of uniting man to God by a happy discipline of obedience—and the constant obedience to which, will bring him to that consummation of bliss, which is ordained in the end and recompense of his work.'¹ Thus in its Author—in its matter—and in its end, it demands our highest regard.

The uses of the law are various and important. *The world* are indebted to it for many wholesome results. It discovers to them the holy nature and character of God; it informs them of their duty, and binds them to the performance of it. Its restraint bridles the lust of man within the bounds of external decency, without which, the world would become "a field of blood." It condemns also those who cast off its yoke.² Even the heathen are brought in guilty by "the work of the law written in their hearts."³ It is also the *medium of conviction of sin*. Some indeed, who dispense with the law from their Ministry, substitute the law of love, as it is called, as the *only means* of conviction. But did not our Lord employ the moral law with the young Ruler, for this express purpose?⁴

¹ Vitr. Obs. Sac. Lib. vi. cap. xvii. 11. ² See 1 Tim. i. 9.

³ Rom. ii. 14, 15.

⁴ Matt. xix. 16—21.

Was it not also the appointed means of bringing the great Apostle to the spiritual apprehension of his sin? ¹ Its cognizance of every thought, imagination, desire, word, and work, and its uncompromising demand of absolute and uninterrupted obedience upon pain of its everlasting penalty—convince the heart of its guilt, defilement, and wretchedness, and leave the sinner without excuse and without help—under the frown of an holy and angry God—prepared to welcome a Saviour, and lost for ever without him. It is this, that forces from him the prayer—“God be merciful to me a sinner”—as the genuine expression of his heart; even though his external deportment had been, “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” ² He now sees in himself the very character of sinfulness and misery to which the Gospel addresses itself; and, stretching out the hand of desire and faith, he receives the free gift of the Gospel of Christ. The Christian feels the advantage of the law too well, to be willing, with the Antinomian, to cast it off, because it has lost its justifying power. ³ For what an enlarged view does he gain even from its *covenant form* of the necessity, character, and excellency of the Gospel! The intervention of a Surety, a Redeemer, and an atonement was the effect

¹ Rom. vii. 7—9. Comp. his general assertion, iii. 20. Again—he informs us, that “the law entered, *that the offence might abound*” —not in the transgression of *the heart* (as the direct fruit of the law) but in *the conviction of the conscience*, awakened by a strong display of the spirituality of the law, and of the Divine denunciations of its righteous curse. v. 20. Indeed we cannot conceive of conviction without the law; since obliquity is only discovered by a reference to a given standard. Even the cross of Christ, as a *means of conviction*, ultimately resolves itself to the law, the breach of which constituted the sin—the cause of his death. The law therefore is of standing and indispensable use in the work of conversion. We may be drawn to Christ without terror, but not without conviction.

² Phil. iii. 6.

³ Comp. Rom. viii. 3.

of the Divine determination to “magnify the law, and make it honourable;”¹ that God might honourably pardon, justify, and save, those who had transgressed its sanctions. Without therefore a view of the excellency of the law, both in its precept and its penalty, no sufficient reason appears for the sufferings and death of Immanuel. Thus “the glory of the Ministration of condemnation” commends the exceeding glory of “the Ministration of life and righteousness.”²—The same glass exhibits to us *indirectly* what the Gospel shows us in *direct terms*—our infinite obligation to the love of Christ for what he has become, done, and suffered in our place. The greatness of his astonishing condescension is our constraining bond to his service, whose obedience has answered all the demands, suffered all the penalties standing against us, and “brought in everlasting righteousness” as our ground of acceptance before God.

As a rule of life also, the Law is of the utmost importance to the Christian. It comes to him with the authority of God, as his Creator, his Sovereign, and his Judge. It is doubly enforced, as the law of his Redeemer, and as the acknowledgment of his readiness to “take his yoke upon him.” For though he is “not without law to God,” yet he is specially “under the law to Christ.”³ The end of this law is not to work out his title to eternal life; but as his exercise in the Christian path of obedience; which even in his present imperfect measure of attainment is his highest earthly privilege, as the perfection of it will be the consummation of his heavenly enjoyment.

The uses of the law as a rule of life are among the most efficient means of promoting Christian stedfast-

¹ Isaiah xlii. 21.

² 2 Cor. iii. 7—9.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 21.



ness and consistency. Being "written in the heart," it affords to the Christian a *continual touchstone of sincerity*. For what better proof is there of uprightness, than "the testimony of his conscience,"¹ that he "consents to the law that it is good;" that he "delights in it after the inward man;" that he esteems all God's commandments "concerning all things to be right;" that he counts his want of perfect conformity to it the sin of every moment; that he is satisfied with no attainment short of being "holy, as he that hath called him is holy," and "perfect, as his Father which is in heaven is perfect."²

The rule of the law also furnishes a *continual and most humbling standard of self-examination*. The most watchful Christian laments his natural, and often unconscious, spring of self-exaltation; to which, however, the law, as the standard of perfection, operates as a constant and timely check. It lays him low in the dust; it confounds him for the sins of his services as well as for his open transgressions, that he may "count all but dung and dross" in comparison of Christ, that he may be simple in his dependence on his cross, and quickened to renewed applications for pardon, acceptance, and supplies of grace. The obligation of this law upon the Christian is immutable as the throne of God. What can alter the relation of a creature to his Creator? The additional bond of redemption strengthens—not annihilates, the original obligation.³ Do we cease to be creatures by becoming new creatures? And are we not therefore bound to personal obedience by the sovereign authority of God? Or does the obligation of the law lose its force by

¹ See 2 Cor. i. 12.

² See Rom. vii. 16, 22. Psalm cxix. 128. 1 Pet. i. 15. Matt. v. 48.

³ Comp. Calvin on Matt. v. 17. Luke x. 26.

being conveyed to us through the hands of Christ—himself Lord of all—and standing to us in the most endearing and authoritative relation? Why, we may ask, do men wish to be rid of this rule? But for some latent enmity to the holiness of the Divine character, the thought of escaping from the directive force of the law would be intolerable. So far from “gendering unto bondage,” it is “the perfect freedom” of evangelical service; so that it is hard to say, whether we are more indebted for deliverance from the law as a covenant, or for subjection to the law as a rule. The proof of our love to the Saviour is the “keeping of his commandments;”¹ which are none others than the precepts of the moral law, bound upon the Christian’s heart with chains of the most powerful and attractive obligation. The first desire of the awakened sinner is—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”² His constant prayer is—“that his love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;” that he may “not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”³ It cannot, therefore, be legal bondage, or indeed otherwise than Evangelical privilege, thus to receive the law from the Saviour’s hands, stripped of its condemning power, and regulating our affections, temper, and conversation to his glory.

Some of our people, however, are so excited and enlivened by the promises of the Gospel, that the inculcation of the law is depressing to them. But, in cases of sincerity, this arises from a narrow misconception of the designs and uses of the law; while, in many other cases, the irregular lives of professors too plainly proves their unconscious need of its

¹ John xiv. 15.² Acts ix. 6.³ Phil. i. 9. Eph. v. 17.

wholesome restraints and directions. Some also of our brethren seem afraid of enforcing the obligations of the law, lest they should be thought to be teachers of Moses rather than of Christ. But our Lord had no hesitation in establishing the obligations of the old dispensation,¹ or in leading his disciples to confess them as their bounden duty.² Following, therefore, his example, we can much more easily bear the imputation of legality for enforcing the sanctions of the law, than the reproaches of our conscience for passing them by.

The leaven of Antinomianism is indeed most congenial with the corruption of the heart ; and its deadly influence is but too apparent in the inconsistent lives of those who systematically adopt it. To suppose that the law of love renders unnecessary the rule of the decalogue, is to put the main-spring of the watch in the place of the regulator ; and to exchange a stable directory of conduct for a principle subject to incessant variations, and readily counterfeited by the delusions of a self-deceiving heart. The disciples of this school rarely, if ever, attain to Christian stedfastness ; while in the too frequent defect of Christian sincerity, immortal souls perish as the melancholy victims of delusion.

Glancing for a moment at the relative connexions of the law, we remark—As a *covenant*, it operates in the divine œconomy of God, as “the spirit of bondage unto fear,” humbling, alarming, convincing, and leading to despondency. As a *rule of life*, under the conduct of Divine influence, it becomes “the spirit of adoption”—witnessing to the sincere Christian his interest in the family of God, in the testimony of his habitual desire and delight in con-

¹ See Matt. v. 17.

² Luke xvii. 10.

formity to its dictates. As *a covenant*, the law brings men to Christ for deliverance from its tyranny. Christ returns them to *the law as their rule*, that, while they are delivered from its dominion, ("that being dead wherein they were held,") they "might serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."¹ And thus they show their gratitude to him for his *perfect obedience to it as a covenant* in their stead, by their *uniform obedience to it as a rule* in his service.

We cannot indeed have too much of the Gospel; but we may have too little of the law. And a defect in the Evangelical preaching of the law is as clear a cause of inefficient Ministration, as a legal preaching of the Gospel. In such a Ministry there must be a want of spiritual conviction of sin *generally*—of spiritual sins *most particularly*—and—flowing directly from hence—a low standard of spiritual obedience. Indeed all the prevalent errors in the Christian Church may be traced to this source. We should never have heard of Methodist perfection—Mystic dependence upon the inward light—Antinomian delusion—inconsistent profession of orthodoxy—Pharisaical self-righteousness—or Pelagian and Socinian rectitude of nature—if the spiritual standard of the law had been clearly displayed, and its convincing power truly felt. And where conviction is either wanting or superficial, the clearest perception of Evangelical views must fail in experimental and practical effect.

But there are Antinomian errors on the opposite side. If Antinomianism be the relaxation of obedience from the perfect standard of the law of God, what is much of that *mere moral preaching* that obtains among us, but a refined species of this unhallowed leaven? The

¹ Rom. vii. 6.

standard to which it recurs is not the law of God, which, as with the professed Antinomian, is wholly cast off, while some indefinite and ever-varying standard of inclination or caprice is substituted in its place. With the professed Antinomian also, the notions of mercy and salvation are here used as the palliation of sin. All hope, and no fear, is the character of this preaching. How frightful to think of the deluded souls sliding into eternity in this golden dream! and of what vast importance is it for the resistance of error, and for a fruitful exhibition of Divine truth—that the Christian Ministry should be distinguished by a full display of the spiritual character, and unalterable obligations of the law of God!

SECTION II.

THE CONNEXION OF THE LAW WITH THE GOSPEL.

MR. NEWTON admirably remarks upon the importance of this subject—‘ Clearly to understand the distinction, connexion, and harmony between the law and the Gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate and establish each other, is a singular privilege, and a happy means of preserving the soul from being entangled by errors on the right hand or the left!’¹ Some in the Apostle’s time “ desired to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.”² This seems to imply the importance, in a Christian teacher, of a clear understanding of the law in all its connexions. And indeed the momentous matter of a sinner’s ac-

¹ Newton’s Works, i. 322.

² 1 Tim. i. 7.

ceptance with God cannot be accurately stated without a distinct view of this subject. The Judaizing teachers of the Galatian church, from misconception of this point, had "darkened the counsel" of the Gospel "by words without knowledge;" "bewitched" their "foolish" hearers from the simplicity of Evangelical obedience; and—instead of establishing them "in the liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free," had well nigh "entangled them again with the yoke of bondage."¹

L. This subject embraces an explicit statement of the *difference between the law and the Gospel*. It was an axiom in the old schools of divinity—'Qui scit bene distinguere inter Legem et Evangelium, Deo gratias agat, et sciat se esse Theologum.' There is much difference in the *original revelation*. The law, *partially at least*, (as in the case of the heathens,) is discoverable by the light of nature;² whereas the Gospel is "the hidden mystery of God," which could only be known by the light of Revelation.³ We find, therefore, man in his natural state partially acquainted with the law, but wholly unacquainted with the Gospel. There is also a difference in their *respective regards to man*. The law contemplates man as the creature of God, endued with capabilities for perfect obedience—such as he was at the period of its first promulgation—"standing perfect and complete in all the will of God." The Gospel, however, contemplates man as he is—a sinner, equally unable to obey, or to offer compensation for disobedience; guilty, condemned, helpless, lost. They differ also *in the power of their sanction*. They both inform us what we

¹ Some valuable remarks, together with the sentiments of Melancthon, on this subject, will be found in Scott's Continuation of Milner, Vol. II. part i. pp. 230—237.

² See Rom. ii. 14, 15.

³ Ib. xvi. 25.



ought to be and do. But the Gospel alone provides the necessary resources, in union with the Son of God, and participation of a heavenly life derived from him. Command is the characteristic of the law; as promise and encouragement is of the Gospel. In the one case obedience is required on the penalty of death; in the other case it is encouraged by the promise of life. A promise is indeed attached to *the obedience* of the law,¹ but placed beyond our reach, upon terms far more difficult than those of Adam's covenant; inasmuch as he was endued with sufficient strength for perfect obedience, while we are entirely helpless for the lowest spiritual requirements. The Gospel on the other hand gives the promise freely, *in order to obedience*, or the principle and motive of it.

In its condemning power also, the law is widely different from the Gospel. As a valuable writer tersely observes—"the law condemns, and cannot justify, a sinner; the Gospel justifies, and cannot condemn, the sinner that believes in Jesus. In the law, God appears in terrible threatenings of eternal death; in the Gospel, he manifests himself in gracious promises of life eternal. In the former he curses, as on Mount Ebal; in the latter he blesses, as on Mount Gerizim. In the one, he speaks in thunder, and with terrible majesty; in the other, with soft whispers, or "a still small voice." By the trumpet of the law he proclaims war with sinners; by the jubilee trumpet of the gospel he publishes peace, "peace on earth, and good will toward men." The law is a sound of terror to convinced sinners; the Gospel is a joyful sound, "good tidings of great joy." The former represents God as a God of wrath and vengeance; the

¹ Gal. iii. 12.

latter, as a God of love, grace, and mercy. The one presents him to sinners as “a consuming fire ;” the other exhibits the precious blood of the Lamb, which quenches the fire of his righteous indignation. That presents to the view of the sinner a throne of judgment ; this, “a throne of grace.” Every sentence of condemnation in Scripture belongs to the law ; every sentence of justification forms a part of the Gospel. The law condemns a sinner for his first offence ; but the Gospel offers him the forgiveness of all his offences.’¹ Thus in every point of difference, “that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.”

II. The *harmony of the law with the Gospel* is also a most important subject of our Ministration. Though distinct, they are not opposite. As coming from the same source, they must ultimately meet in the same plan, and subserve the same end. Like the seemingly opposite perfections of their glorious Author, they harmonize in mutual subserviency in the Christian system. The provisions of the Gospel are fully commensurate with the demands of the law. Its righteousness fulfils the law as a covenant ; its grace obeys it as a rule. Both have a commanding and condemning power. Both combine to lead the sinner to Christ—‘the law, as a schoolmaster,’ showing his need of him ; the Gospel, exhibiting him in all points suitable to his need. In this centre of everlasting love, the “mercy” of

¹ Colquhoun on Law and Gospel, pp. 166, 167. Thus also Patrick Hamilton, the Scotch reformer, writes—‘The law showeth us our sin—the gospel showeth us a remedy for it. The law showeth us our condemnation—the gospel showeth us our redemption. The law is the word of ire—the gospel is the word of grace. The law is the word of despair—the gospel is the word of comfort. The law is the word of disquietude—the gospel is the word of peace.’ Patrick’s Places—with a short preface by the martyr John Frith. See also Bradford’s view of this subject. *Fathers of English Church*, vi. 389, 890.

the Gospel "and the truth" of the law "meet together." The "righteousness" of the law and the "peace" of the Gospel here "embrace each other."¹ Both unite to endear the ways of God to the Christian—the law, as the instrument of conviction, teaching us to prize the grace of the Gospel; the Gospel, as the principle of holiness, exciting us "to delight in the law of God after the inward man."

The *directive* power of the law is in equal consonance with the spirit and end of the Gospel. The grace of the Gospel regulates the Christian's heart and life by the rule of the law. "Love," which is "the fulfilling of the law," is also the great end of the Gospel. The Gospel nowhere dwells, but "where the law of God is written in the heart." Thus, as they are both parts of the same revelation, they unite in the same heart; and, though the offices of each are materially distinct, neither will be found separate from the other. As both are transcripts of the Divine mind and image, both must be hated or loved together. In the former case, the radical principle of the carnal mind is stirred up; in the latter case, it is the mind of Christ, and the commencement of the service of heaven.

III. *The law as a preparation for the Gospel*, is also a part of our public Ministry. The discipline of the law, in the usual course of the work of Divine grace, is the preparatory step to the clear apprehension and legitimate enjoyment of the Gospel. The order therefore of the dispensation of the Christian Ministry is *first to wound by the law—then to heal by the Gospel.*² The Apostle speaks of us, "before faith

¹ Psalm lxxxv. 10.

² Not however that the law should ever be unconnected with the gospel. Our Great Pattern in his sermon on the Mount—when unveiling the *spirituality of the law for the purpose of conviction*—introduced, intermingled, and finished his subject.

came, as being under the law, *shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed*”—and thus “the law is our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith;” which Luther explains to mean—‘that the *law must be laid upon those that are to be justified*, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof, until the righteousness of faith come—that, *when they are cast down and humbled by the law*, they should fly to Christ. The Lord humbles them, not to their destruction, but to their salvation. *For God woundeth*, that he may heal again. He killeth, that he may quicken again.’¹

This appears to have been the uniform opinion of the church. Augustine remarks—‘the conscience is not to be healed, if it be not wounded. *Thou preachesst and pressest the law*, comminations, the judgment to come, with much earnestness and importunity. He which hears, if he be not terrified, if *he be not troubled, is not to be comforted.*’² Our Reformers were evidently of this judgment. Tindal writes thus—‘It becometh the preacher of Christ’s glad tidings, first, *through the opening of the law*, to prove all things sin, that proceed not of the Spirit, and of faith in Christ; and thereby to bring him unto the knowledge of himself, and of his misery and wretchedness, that *he might derive help.*’³ Luther has been already referred to. Calvin observes—‘that the *law is nothing else but a preparation unto the Gospel.*’ And elsewhere—‘The faithful cannot profit in the Gospel, until they shall be first humbled;

with *most encouraging promises of the gospel*. Thus is the law a dark ground, on which the gospel is exhibited to the greatest advantage.

¹ Gal. iii. 23, 24, and Luther, in loco.

² Comment. in Psalm lix.

³ Prologue to the Epistle to the Romans, in *Fathers of the English Church.* Vol. i. 54.

which cannot be, until they come to the knowledge of their sins. It is the *proper function of the law*, to call the consciences into God's judgment, and to *wound them with fear.*'¹ Beza remarks briefly, but to the point—'Men are ever to be *prepared for the Gospel, by the preaching of the law.*'² Archbishop Usher, in reply to the question before us—'What order is there (in the Ministry) used in the delivery of the word, for the begetting of faith?' answers—'First, the *covenant of the law is urged*, to make sin and the punishment thereof known; whereupon the sting of conscience pricketh the heart with a sense of God's wrath, and maketh a man utterly to despair of any ability in himself to obtain everlasting life. *After this preparation the promises of God are propounded*; whereupon the sinner, conceiving a hope of pardon, sueth to God for mercy.'³ The ablest of the Puritan Divines took this view of the subject. Mr. Perkins (one of the most systematic of them) speaks of the influence of the work of the law, as making way for the Gospel. '*And then*' (says he) '*succeeds seasonably, and comfortably, the work of the Gospel.*'⁴ Mr. Bolton (one of the most eloquent and experienced Divines of his day) observes,—'Let the power of the law first break and bruise, which is a *necessary preparative* for the plantation of grace; and then pour in (and spare not) the most precious oil of the sweetest Evangelical comfort. *But many, very many, mar all with missing this method*; either from want of sanctification in themselves, or skill to manage their Master's business.'⁵ Mr. Rogers of Dedham (a most experi-

¹ Calvin on John x. 8. xvi. 10. ² Beza on 2 Cor. iii. 11.

³ Usher's Body of Divinity, p. 399.

⁴ Perkins on the Nature and Practice of Repentance, chap. iii. on Rom. viii. 15.

⁵ Bolton's Discourse on True Happiness, p. 176.

Gospel—the sense of sin and misery connected with the hope of mercy. Still less must we insist upon these preparatory exercises as meritorious, or as entrenching in any degree upon the unconditional freeness of the Gospel. They are needful, not as qualifications to recommend us, but as predispositions to draw us, to Christ. We must come to him, if at all, upon the terms of his own gracious invitation, “without money and without price.”¹ But the sense of misery is the preparative for the remedy. “The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” As Calvin remarks—‘Christ is promised only to those, who are humbled and confounded with the sense of their own sins.’² The invitation is specially addressed to those “that labour and are heavy laden;” and none but such will “incline their ear and come.”

Mr. Newton observes, in the case of Mr. Grimshaw, ‘that a Minister walking with God in a conscientious improvement of the light received, deeply convinced under the law, and but imperfectly acquainted with the Gospel, is peculiarly qualified to preach with effect to ignorant and wicked people, whose habits of sin have been strengthened by a long disregard of the Holy Law of God, and who have had no opportunity of hearing the Gospel. They cannot at first receive, or even understand, that accurate and orderly statement and discussion of Evangelical truths, which renders Ministers, who are more advanced in knowledge, acceptable to judicious and enlightened hearers. But they may feel a close and faithful application to their consciences, and be “persuaded,” by “the terror of the Lord” to “consider their ways,” before they are capable of being much influenced by the consideration of his

¹ Isaiah lv. 1.

² Calvin on Isaiah lxxv. 1.

tender mercies. The Minister is sufficiently before them to point out the first steps in the way; and as he goes gradually forward, "growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Saviour," they gradually follow him. Thus many of our most eminent Evangelical modern preachers were led.'¹

IV. *The establishment of the law by the Gospel* belongs also to the Scriptural Preaching of the law. The Apostle thus anticipates a feasible objection against his statement of justification—"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! *Yea, we establish the law.*"² *The faith or doctrine of the Gospel "establishes the law" in its covenant form—*as exhibiting a Divine Suretiship of obedience to the law, as the satisfactory price for justification—and in its *directive form*—by inculcating the obligations to obedience upon a stronger foundation, and fulfilling them in sincerity, from the principles of a divine life, and upon the constraining impulse of evangelical motives. The offices of Christ thus combine as the delightful object of our hope. As our Surety, he delivers us from the curse of the law—As our King, he brings us under its rule. And indeed it is only

¹ Newton's Life of Grimshawe, pp. 44—46. The truth of these valuable remarks may be illustrated by the early history of Mr. Scott's change of sentiment.—See his Force of Truth.

² Rom. iii. 31. The expositions of many of the Christian Fathers on this text prove their defective views on subjects connected with the law. Origen expounds the establishment of the law by faith—'Quia Christus inquit: "Moses de me scripsit."' *Ambrosius*—'Quia ceremonialia scripturaliter implentur, et quod minus in moralibus lex continebat, in Evangelio additur: et quod tunc promittebatur futurum, fides advenisse testatur.' *Hieronymus*—'Quia fide probamus verum esse, quod lex dicit, testamentum testamento, legem legi...successuram.' As Parè remarks—'Aliquid dicunt, non totum.' Augustine entered far more clearly into the Apostle's meaning—'Lex non evacuatur, sed statuitur per fidem, quia fides impetrat gratiam, quâ lex implcatur.' De Spir. et Lit. c. 29. Again—'Literâ jubetur, spiritu donatur.' Epist. 200.

mental divine) speaks most strongly on this view—
 ‘Let none speak *against the preaching of the law*; for it is the wholesome way, *that God himself and his servants in all ages have taken*. Preachers must *first humble men with the law*. *The law first humbles, then the Gospel comforts*. None can prove that faith was wrought in an instant at first, *without any preparation going before.*’¹ Greenham (a divine of the same school, highly esteemed in his day) briefly writes—
 ‘When the word is administered in any power and sincerity, *there doubtless the preaching of the law strikes in*, and the preaching of the Gospel bringeth us unto Christ.’² Another writer of consideration observes—‘Such is the nature of man, that, *before he can receive a true justifying faith*, he must as it were be *broken in pieces by the law*. We are to be led from the fear of slaves, through the fear of penitents, to the fear of sons.’³ Gurnal expresses this view with his characteristic familiarity of illustration—‘The sharp point of the law must prick the conscience, before the creature can by the promises of the Gospel be drawn to Christ. The field is not fit for the seed to be cast into it, till the plough hath broken it up; nor is the soul prepared to receive the mercy of the Gospel, till broken with the terrors of the law.’⁴ This series of quotations may be concluded with the full and decided testimony of Dr. Owen, not more remarkable for his powerful defence of Christian doctrine, than for his deep insight into every part of experimental godliness—‘Let no man think’ (says he) ‘to understand the Gospel, who knoweth nothing

¹ Rogers’s *Doctrine of Faith*, pp. 97, 68, 63.

² Greenham’s works, p. 139.

³ Yates’s *Model of Divinity*, Book ii. chap. 26.

⁴ Gurnal on Eph. vi. 19.

of the law. God's *constitution and the nature of things themselves have given the law the precedency* with respect to sinners; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." And Gospel faith is the soul's acting according to the mind of God for deliverance from that state and condition, which it is cast under by the law. And all those descriptions of faith, which abound in the writings of learned men, which do not at least include in them a virtual respect unto this state and condition, or *the work of the law on the consciences of sinners*, are all of them vain speculations. There is nothing in this whole doctrine that I will more firmly adhere unto, than the necessity of the *conviction* mentioned, *previous unto true believing*; without which not one line of it can be understood aright; and men do but beat the air in their contention about it.'¹

We must not however expect to find these preparative workings of the law in all cases with the same degree of intensity or consciousness. What Bishop Davenant says of faith—'that justification does not depend upon the degree or measure, but upon the truth of faith'²—is true of every part of the Divine work, in regard to the warranted comfort to be derived from it. Nor do we observe in every instance with equal distinctness the order of the precedent acts, or their separate operations and combined effect. We must be careful not to load the sinner with threatenings, from an apprehension of a superficial work of contrition. The genuine spirit of Evangelical humiliation is not the separate exclusive work of the law, but of the law preparatory to, and combined with, the

¹ Owen on Justification, chap. ii.

² Non ex gradu, aut mensura fidei dependet justificatio, sed ex veritate. Daven. in Col. p. 21.

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We must not however expect to find these preparative workings of the law in all cases with the same degree of intensity or consciousness. What Bishop Davenant says of faith—'that justification does not depend upon the degree or measure, but upon the truth of faith'²—is true of every part of the Divine work, in regard to the warranted comfort to be derived from it. Nor do we observe in every instance with equal distinctness the order of the precedent acts, or their separate operations and combined effect. We must be careful not to load the sinner with threatenings, from an apprehension of a superficial work of contrition. The genuine spirit of Evangelical humiliation is not the separate exclusive work of the law, but of the law preparatory to, and combined with, the

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‘The great and glorious God is jealous of his own authority, and of the honour of his Son Jesus. Nor will he condescend to bless any other methods for obtaining so Divine an end, than what he himself has prescribed. Nor will his Holy Spirit, whose office is to glorify Christ, stoop to concur with any other sort of means for the saving of sinners, where the name and office of his Son, the only appointed Saviour, are known, despised, and neglected. It is the Gospel alone, that is the power of God to salvation. ‘If the Prophets will not stand in his counsel, nor cause the people to hear his way, they will never be able to turn Israel from the iniquity of their ways, nor from the evil of their doings.’ Unless, therefore, you have such an high esteem for the Gospel of Christ, and such a sense of its Divine worth and power, as to take it along with you in all your efforts to save souls, you had better lay down your Ministry, and abandon your sacred profession; for you but spend your strength for nought, and waste your breath in empty declamation.’¹ Thus Mr. Cecil well observed—‘Christ crucified is God’s grand ordinance.’² No souls, therefore, can be won to him, if his name, work, or glory, are in any measure obscured; neither can any stedfastness be expected in a religious profession (unless, indeed, stability in self-righteousness should be so termed), unless our flock have so “received him, as to walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith.”³ In the same view, Archbishop Secker remarked to his Clergy—‘We have in fact lost many of our *people to Sectaries*, by not preaching in a manner sufficiently Evangelical;’⁴ and

¹ See Watts’s Humble Attempt, pp. 27—39.

² Cecil’s Remains.

³ Col. ii. 6, 7.

⁴ Bishop Horne remarked to the same purport—‘Many well-

shall neither recover them from the extravagancies, into which they have run; nor keep more from going over to them, but by returning to the right way, "*declaring all the counsel of God*;" and that principally, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." And again—'If you have preached a considerable time in a place, and done little or no good, there must in all probability be some fault, not only in your hearers, but in you, or your sermons: "For the Word of God," when duly dispensed, is to this day, as it was originally, "powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword." Inquire then where the fault may be.'¹ The importance of this Scriptural preaching of the Gospel, will fully justify us in pursuing the subject into some of its points of detail.

SECTION I.

DOCTRINAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

It has been already shown, that the death of Christ is the soul, which must give life to the whole system of Christian doctrine. We remark, therefore, in connexion with this point, that our doctrinal preaching

meaning Christians of this time thirst after the doctrine of the gospel, and think they have heard nothing, unless they have heard of salvation by Jesus Christ, which is what we properly call the Gospel; and if they do not hear it in the discourses from our pulpits, where they expect to hear it, they are tempted to *wander in search of it to other places of worship*.' Qu. Is the defalcation of our people to sectaries, however to be lamented, *the whole, or even the chief, responsibility* connected with a defective tone of preaching? "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" Hos. iv. 6.

¹ Charges, pp. 276, 296. The Charges of the late Bishops Porteus and Barrington distinctly advert to the same point.

should be *full and explicit*. Let it comprehend within its circle the whole mystery of Christ; in his person, offices, and work; connecting itself with the love of the Father, and the work of the Spirit, in every department of Evangelical privilege, duty, promise, and hope. We do not always observe this large compass in Christian Ministrations. Many confine themselves to favourite doctrines, to the neglect of others of at least equal importance. Some are continually employed in detecting the delusions of a false profession; others, in fulminating the terrors of the law; others, in painting the awful condition of the unconverted; others in general invitations to Christ, irrespective of spiritual conviction; others, in an indiscriminate application of the promises and consolations of the Gospel. Some seem to forget, that the Church as well as the world needs a quickening and directing Ministry. Some withhold "the deep things of God," revealed by the Spirit—if not altogether from their system—at least from their scriptural prominence. Now in all these cases, there is a want of that *entireness*, on which so much stress has always been laid, in the statement of the Divine commission.¹ We forget the obligation bound up in our office—as angels, to keep close to our message; as ambassadors, to discharge our commission; as depositories, to be faithful to our trust.² Our testimony, therefore,

¹ Mark the instances of Joshua, (viii. 35.) Jeremiah's commission, (xxvi. 2. with lii. 4.)—our Lord's appeals concerning his public Ministry, (Psalm xl. 9, 10. John xv. 15. xvii. 8.)—the angel's message to the apostles, (Acts v. 20.) Paul's testimony before the church, (Acts xx. 26, 27.)

² 'Who is a true and faithful steward?' (asks Latimer in his honest plainness of speech) 'He is true, he is faithful, that coineth no new money, but seeketh it ready coined of the good man of the house; and neither changeth it, nor clippeth it, after it is taken to him to spend, but spendeth even the self-same that he had

must be declared without concealment—not indeed forcing offensive truths into undue prominence; yet not daring to withhold them in their Scriptural proportion—adapting our statements to the spiritual capacities of our people;¹ yet jealous, that nothing be omitted from fear of offence, or from disgust to particular doctrines, either in our own, or in our hearers' minds—“not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”²

The guilt, corruption, and ruin of man by the fall—his free and full justification through faith in the atoning blood and meritorious obedience of the Redeemer—his adoption by faith into the family of God—the holy nature and evidences of this faith—the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration, progressive sanctification, and in all his offices of holy and heavenly consolation—these are cardinal points of a full and explicit declaration of the Gospel, which no “scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven” can fail to set forth. It is material also to shew, that in this great work of salvation, the three persons of the Deity coincide, though their several acts may be differently denominated, as one person is made more prominent, according to his specific office in the œconomy of redemption.³

These will be generally admitted as important and glorious views of the Gospel. But to affirm, that

of his Lord, and spendeth it as his Lord commanded him.’ Sermon on Luke xvi. 1, 2.

¹ Comp. Mark iv. 33. with 1 Cor. iii. 1—3. Heb. v. 11—14.

² 2 Cor. iv. 2.

³ It may be doubted in this view, whether the offices of the Spirit are generally set forth in their full scriptural glory and necessity, especially as the originator of a believing reception of the Saviour; in which character if we duly honour him, we may

they comprize the *entire Gospel*, is, in the Writer's judgment, to put a part (though indeed a very considerable part) for the whole. Much of the Divine revelation is withheld from our people, and we leave our statement on this head very much below the Scriptural standard of truth, if we stop here. The calling of us by God is said to be "according to his own purpose and grace given unto us in Christ Jesus before the world began."¹ Thus is this eternal purpose not only an integral part of the scheme of salvation, but the fountain, from which all springs—the foundation, on which all rests and turns—the assurance, by which all is confirmed. All the rest, however desirable and however desired, present nothing to secure their attainment, but the mutable will of the creature—the will of a mind that is "enmity against God" to secure reconciliation with him and happiness in him. Our blessed Lord in his public Ministry referred every thing to his heavenly Father, as the source, from whence all blessings flow, and as the Sovereign dispenser of them to whomsoever he would.² The Apostles, in their system of didactic instruction to the Churches, set forth the same views, though with greater clearness of detail.³ And therefore they should be followed by us, with the steady exhibition of these subjects in the same manner, and in accordance with their statements. Hence—in declaring the freeness of the invitations of the Gospel, we must not hide the basis of our effectual calling.⁴ In displaying hope that he will honour us, by exerting that power, which we have distinctly and dutifully ascribed to him.

¹ 2 Tim. i. 9.

² John vi. 24—65 ; x. 24—30.

³ See Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians. In the former Epistle (the most systematic scheme of Evangelical doctrine)—and especially in the chapter of Christian privilege (viii.) electing love is exhibited in its full and prominent proportion.

⁴ John vi. 37.



the riches of grace, we must not forget to trace it to the sovereign pleasure of God.¹ We must enforce the obligations of holiness as connected with, and resulting from the eternal designs of God.² Thus must we set forth these doctrines in their due place, and with that strength and distinctness of statement, in which we find them in the sacred volume; avoiding indeed forced and needless repetition, yet not shrinking from the manly tone of Scriptural decision; connecting these truths with every link in the chain of salvation, yea—with every step of Divine mercy, from its first origin in the mind of God to its final eternal consummation, in order that God may be glorified in all.

And is not the mind of our Church upon this subject (we might ask) clearly demonstrated? Let any one consult diligently the Seventeenth Article, and what will he find in it but a full picture of electing love—as the source of our calling³—of our obedience to the call⁴—of our justification⁵—our adoption⁶—our holiness⁷—our Christian walk⁸—and our final happiness?⁹ Surely she must have given this elaborate and accurate—this cautious but uncompromising statement—as a model to her Ministers for the presentment of this high and holy doctrine. And if it be (as she has described it) ‘full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons’—will not the exhibition of it be connected with a large flow of Christian privilege and holy devotedness.¹⁰ And will not the want of its cheering beams and

¹ Eph. i. 3—6. 2 Tim. i. 9.

² Rom. viii. 29. Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2.

³ 2 Tim. i. 9.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 2.

⁵ Rom. viii. 30.

⁶ Eph. i. 5.

⁷ Rom. viii. 29. Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. ⁸ Eph. ii. 10.

⁹ John vi. 39. x. 28, 29. xvii. 24. Rom. viii. 30.

¹⁰ See the prominent place, which this doctrine seems to occupy in that magnificent passage, Rom. viii. 33—39.

enlivening principles in our Ministry (with whatever measure of converting grace it may be attended) be followed with a more languid growth in Christian sanctification and especially of that frame of mind, which above all others characterizes the felicity of heaven—an adoring view and acknowledgment of sovereign grace.¹

We are aware of the importance of a judicious exhibition of Scriptural truth. At the same time nothing can so little answer to this character, as the refraining to speak fully and distinctly, as God in his blessed word has spoken. Much danger may be apprehended to our own minds from the influence of expediency or excessive caution. Mr. Richmond well observed—‘I dare not omit what God hath revealed to his Church; nor call that useless or dangerous, which he requires me to believe and teach.’² Indeed it appears sinful to refrain from expounding to our people, according to the light afforded us, any part of that book, which was evidently designed for general and popular instruction, and of which we are the ordained interpreters. ‘Take thou authority to preach the word of God,³—was a large commission entrusted to us at our Ordination, and comprehended within its terms the full extent of the Evangelical system.—Judicious preaching therefore implies a clear display of *every Christian doctrine*—in the statement, in the order, according to the proportion, and for the ends, in which we conceive them to be set forth in Scripture. If our imperfect apprehensions (for such are the most enlightened of them) prevent us from “declaring all the counsel of God;” let our sermons shew, that we “do not shun to declare it”⁴—that we

¹ See Rev. v. 9—14.

³ Ordination of Priests.

² Life, p. 139.

⁴ Acts xx. 27.

keep it in view—that nothing is wilfully concealed. Let it be our aim, study, and prayer, so to “grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ,” that our preaching may not only be true, but the truth—the whole truth—“the truth as it is in Jesus.” Indeed we may consider it as a good test of the correctness of our system, that it naturally leads us to value and set forth every truth bearing the stamp of Divine authority. Should it lead us to refrain either from Scriptural doctrines or from practical exhortations, and admit of our citing texts, only to weaken their evident and legitimate force, some serious defect must exist. An accurate view of Christian doctrine would necessarily connect every part with some important end. Yet on the other hand an undue partiality for particular parts of the system must be avoided, as being equally unscriptural with an undue concealment.² Much guard also is required against overstatement. Inferences that appear to be strictly legitimate, must be received with holy fear and caution, except as they are supported by explicit Scripture declarations. ‘Let us ever stop’ (as Professor Campbell reminds us,) ‘where revelation stops; and not pretend to move one inch beyond it.’³ How wise and holy was the spirit of Bishop Ridley, thus writing to his fellow-martyr, Bradford—‘In those matters’ (referring to election, on which Coverdale informs us, he wrote an excellent treatise) ‘I am so fearful, that I dare not speak further, yea, almost none otherwise, than the very text doth, as it were, lead me by the hand.’³

² See some important remarks in the application of Mr. Scott’s Sermon on Election and Perseverance.

³ On Systematic Theology, Lect. .ii.

³ Fathers of the English Church, vol. iv. 249. The Writer desires to give this explicit statement of his own views in the

The study of the Apostolical Epistles is in this view of the first importance. It will shew, whether every "jot and tittle" of Scriptural truth delivered to the primitive churches, (with the exception of casuistical questions, such as 1 Cor. vii. viii.) be included in our course of Ministerial instruction. It will teach us, what to bring forth, and in what mode—to form alike

spirit of forbearance to his brethren. He is aware that difference must be expected to exist upon these deep and mysterious subjects until the plenary effusion of the Spirit of light and love. He conceives however, that none of us should suppose ourselves to be *so entirely possessed of the whole truth*, as to be satisfied with present attainments. Every part of "the faith delivered to the saints," is not equally distinct to every spiritual apprehension. More study and prayer may be expected to bring clearer views of Divine truth, and increasing fulness, simplicity, and unction in the statement of them. Much prejudice against these particular doctrines has doubtless arisen from the controversial and repulsive mode in which they have been stated, unconnected with that humility, watchfulness, holy devotedness, and enjoyment of Christian privileges, in which the Church rises to a higher tone of spirituality, and a fuller unction of the Divine Spirit is poured out. At the same time the danger of attachment to human systems should make us scrupulously careful, that we "call no man" Master "upon earth." On the other hand we must be equally careful not to oppose what we do not understand. We must watch against repugnance to the study of any particular portions of Scripture; which is the sure indication of a wrong temper of heart—of a want of "trembling at the word"—and of a disposition even to cancel what our proud hearts cannot receive. The Writer would therefore impress upon his brethren, whether of the Arminian or Calvinistic school, the obligation of full and explicit statements of truth according as they are given in the Holy Scriptures. There will, it is true, still be some diversity of statement, arising from the bias of their own minds. But God's word will be honoured; they will be delivered from the guilt of the wilful suppression of truth; whatever difference may appear will not savour, as it too often does, of controversy; and while the views of the parties themselves will more nearly approximate, their minds will be brought more into an harmonious and brotherly agreement. They will also be led to concede to each other that liberty, which, from a sense of fidelity to God, they severally claim for themselves;—and, in conformity to the Apostolic rule, "whereto they have already attained," they will learn to "walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing." (Phil. iii. 16.)

the doctrine, the statement, and the terms, upon the Divine model. It will mark the unscriptural scheme of giving abstract views of the doctrines of grace, instead of combining them with those practical enforcements of holiness, in which the sacred writers uniformly produce them.¹ It will mark also the error of avoiding the use of the terms, in which holy inspiration has clothed these deep and mysterious doctrines, (and in which our people find them in the authorized version of the Scriptures) probably from the apprehension of exciting disgust, misconception, or licentiousness; which, however well intentioned, is unevangelical in its spirit, and gradually substitutes a lower style or standard of preaching in the room of the spiritual character and unadulterated purity of the Gospel.² It has been justly observed, that ‘a fixed deference to any other examples leads insensibly to partial representations of the Gospel, if not to absolute error.’³ The confidence of our people can only be assured, when they mark all the doctrines and statements of their own Scriptures embodied in our public Ministrations.

Bishop Horsley’s forcible language may fitly close this discussion—‘Pray earnestly to God to assist the Ministration of the word; by the secret influence of the Holy Spirit in the minds of your hearers: and nothing doubting that your prayers are heard, however *mean and illiterate* the congregation may be, in which you

¹ See Deut. vii. 6. x. 15, 16. Rom. viii. 29. Eph. i. 4. ii. 10. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2.

² Bishop Davenant remarks on this point—‘Hoc adversatur huic libertati, quæ requiritur in Ministris Christi; quos oportet, non modo ipsam substantiam (ut ita loquar) et possessionem veritatis retinere; sed *extremos etiam limites, et quasi confinia ejusdem defendere*—in Col. iv. 4.

³ Bishop of Chester’s Apostolical Preaching, pp. 257, 258. Some valuable thoughts may be found in Macknight’s Essay I.—Prefatory to his Commentary on the Epistles.

exercise your sacred functions, fear not to set before them the *whole counsel of God*. *Open the whole of your message without reservation*, that every one of you may have confidence to say, when he shall be called upon to give an account of his stewardship—
 “ Lord, I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and truth from the great congregation.”¹

Our doctrinal statements must also be simple. Our materials of instruction are sufficiently simple—sin and salvation—ruined man recovered by Christ. But it is of main importance, that the sinner’s way to Christ should be made as plain, as were of old the ways to the cities of refuge. “ The stumbling-blocks ” of unbelief and self-righteousness must be “ taken up out of the way of God’s people.”² The necessity of previous attainments of holiness must be discountenanced; an instant application to Christ upon the warrant of his word encouraged; the freeness of the invitations of the Gospel, and the willingness and sufficiency of the Saviour, must be displayed; and finally, the certainty of acceptance to all that are willing to “ repent and believe the Gospel,” must be assured. “ Repent and be converted.” “ Believe and be saved.” “ Look and live.” “ Whosoever will, let him come.”³

The maintainance of scriptural simplicity in our doctrinal instructions, will preserve us from paralyzing our Ministrations by tame and subordinate topics, like men, whom Bishop Reynolds aptly describes—“ of an Athenian temper, “ who spend all their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new ” Theology; not contenting themselves with the wholesome form of sound words, and the general harmony of orthodox

¹ Charges, p. 16.

² Isaiah lvii. 14.

³ Acts iii. 19. xvi. 31. John iii. 14, 15. Rev. xxii. 17.

doctrine—who direct all the studies and navigations of their minds unto Theologia incognita—to practise new experiments, and to make new discoveries. In things doctrinal to cry up new lights, and to amuse the people with metaphysical fancies, as if they were deep and heavenly mysteries; and in the mean time to neglect the preaching of duty, and the savoury and saving principles of repentance and new obedience, is a far readier means to make men question the truth of all that they learned before, than ever to attain any certain knowledge of the things which are newly taught them.’¹

This spirit of simplicity will also preserve in us a holy reverence for every tittle of Scripture, and a holy jealousy of perverting a single clause of the Divine word. In the expounding of Scripture, it will induce the inquiry, whether our construction of the passage arises from the undue bias of an human system, or from the clear light of Divine teaching. We shall be led to adopt that exposition only, which, if we belonged to no party in the Church, would appear to us to be the genuine meaning.

Our *doctrinal instructions must also be connected.* Many important truths of the Gospel may be preached in a disjointed manner; and yet the Gospel itself, truly

¹ Sermon on Self-denial, Works, pp. 809, 810. After warning against ‘affectation of new senses and meanings of Scripture, and picking exceptions at the pious and solid expositions of other learned men’—he adds this admirable advice—‘Whenever we judge it needful to interpose any opinion or sense of our own, let us—First—do it with humility and reverence, and with reservation of honour and reverence unto others from whom we differ; not magisterially with an *εὐρηκα*, as if we spake rather oracles than opinions. Secondly, let us take heed of departing from “the analogy of faith,” and that “knowledge which is according to godliness,” into diverticles of fancy and critical curiosity; but let us resolve ever to judge those expositions best and soundest, which are most orthodox, practical, and heavenly, and most tending unto the furtherance of duty and godliness.’

speaking, not be preached. The perfections of God, without a view of their harmony in the work of Christ—the purposes of God, as unconnected with the covenant engagements of Christ—the glories of heaven, without a reference to him as the way thither—the power, defilement, guilt, and condemnation of sin, separated from the doctrine of salvation through Christ—the work of the Holy Spirit, unconnected with the atonement, and irrespective of the privilege of union with Christ—the imputed righteousness of the Saviour disunited from his imparted righteousness—the reception of Christ by faith, without its active working upon the renewal of the heart—the exhibition of the promises, separated from the duties; or of the duties, independent of their constraining motives—these may be portions of the Gospel severally detached, but, as broken off from their Scriptural connexion, they cannot be said to constitute the preaching of the Gospel. Indeed, these fragments of truth, in this indigested disorderly form, if not entirely powerless, must fail in producing, at least in any extensive influence, that solid foundation and superstructure of Christian doctrine, by which the temple of God is raised among us. There is also a misplacing of the truths of the Gospel, which, like confusion in the machinery of clock-work, makes the whole system go wrong. Sometimes also, the full display of the work of the Saviour, by a narrow misconception of the purposes of God, is disjointed from the free and universal invitations of the Gospel. And sometimes, again, there is a danger of making important statements of practical truth, without a direct and immediate reference to Christ. This failure of tracing the requisitions of obedience to him as the only source of life, produces, instead of “the fruits of the Spirit,” only “wild grapes,”

or "dead works." For as "faith without works is dead," so works without faith are dead also. Distorted or speculative views of truth have given rise, on the other hand, to these defective statements; which (though often attributable to youth, inexperience, or the instrumental means of our admission into the church of Christ) mar the beauty and completeness of the Gospel, and enervate its Divine power and demonstration. But we must not mutilate, suppress, or disconnect any part, on account of the abuse that has been made of it. We must not deny the children their bread; because by some it may have been adulterated, or by others (to use our Lord's image) "cast unto the dogs."¹ We must not withhold the "strong drink from him that is ready to perish," or the "wine" of Divine consolation from "those that be of heavy hearts,"² because some have intoxicated themselves by unseasonable mixtures. If some poison their people, others may be in danger of starving them. How few, comparatively, like "pastors after God's heart, feed" their flock "with knowledge and understanding!"³ The evils of Antinomianism, and other false systems, are indirect as well as positive, producing a revulsion to the opposite side. We forget that *opposition to error* may be error; and that truth lies in the middle path, and may be easily represented in false connexion, or in unconnected particles, so as to become positive error. Half-statements on either side are mis-statements; and it is of little comparative moment to speak on some points "with the tongues of men and of angels," while on other points of considerable, if not of fundamental, importance, we are either afraid to speak clearly, or we speak under misconception.

¹ Matt. xv. 26.² Prov. xxxi. 5.³ Jer. lii. 15.

We should be careful also that *our doctrinal statements be unfettered*. In order to this, we must not be satisfied with a perception of the truth through the medium of any standard writer. We must search for ourselves. It is "in God's light that we must see light."¹ And yet—while it is our glory and strength to embrace the whole Scripture, and to aim at Bible preaching—it is extremely difficult to escape the moulding of our views into some human framework.² No party in the church, probably, grasps the entire compass of Divine truth. Many rough edges must be smoothed, in order to fit a certain well-arranged system. Many texts must be omitted from the fear of inconsistency. Christian integrity therefore will dictate a fearless statement of the doctrines of the Gospel in their unqualified form and bearings, careless what scheme we may be thought to favour. Doubtless scriptural truth is given in a connected system, bringing forth into exercise all the principles of the Divine government, and displaying the most glorious and satisfactory view of the Divine character. This system embraces the sovereignty of God in perfect consistency with his universal equity, and the free agency of man untouched by his total depravity. And if our reason cannot discern or adjust the consistency of these seemingly opposite points, yet faith will receive them both with equal simplicity, and state them both in the most unmeasured terms; leaving the harmonizing of them to the infinite wisdom of God. If God as a Sovereign "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"—yet does his mercy flow

¹ Psalm xxxvi. 9.

² Witsius thus solemnly warns his modest Divine—"Ea (Dei oracula) quovis, vel levissimo torquere modo, ut præjudicatis respondeant hypothesis, nefas ac propemodum scelus est." De Theologo Modesto.

according to the faithful engagements of his covenant. He "divideth unto every man severally as he will." He may give, or he may refuse. Yet he hath said—"Seek, and ye shall find;" and by this promise he hath engaged, that none shall "seek his face in vain."¹ In the work of regeneration, God is the only efficient mover. Man is entirely passive. Hence it seems to follow, that he is acted upon as a machine. Yet is he "drawn with the cords of a man."² No constraint is put upon his will.³ Salvation is offered, not forced upon him. There is, therefore, no infringement of his free agency, while the whole work from first to last is the grace of God.⁴ All is of God—who works in setting us to work,⁵ and whose rule of procedure is—"He that hath, to him shall be given."⁶—Man is addressed as a rational agent. Though paralytic, he is commanded to walk. Though dead, he is called to "rise from the dead."⁷ He may come to Christ—He is invited to come—He is bound to come—and it is his sin, if he does not come; while at the same time his selfish unhumbled heart chains him under a moral inability to come, and leaves him without excuse. For it cannot be supposed, that his inability cancels his obligation; or that God will compromise with carnal men, by requiring any thing less than his just and absolute claim. But thus man is urged to acts, for which he has no inherent power. He is pressed with topics,

¹ Matt. vii. 7, 8. with Isaiah xlv. 19.

² Hosea xi. 4.

³ See Psalm cx. 3.

⁴ Augustine well remarked,—*'Si non sit liberum arbitrium, quomodo damnabitur mundus? Si non sit gratia, quomodo servabitur?'* Nearly to the same purport was Bernard's language—*'Si non sit liberum arbitrium, non est quod salvetur; si non sit gratia, non est unde salvetur.'* Epist. 46.

⁵ See Phil. ii. 12, 13.

⁶ Mark iv. 25.

⁷ Eph. v. 14. See this subject illustrated in the parable of the dry bones. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10.

which have a moral suitableness to engage his faculties, and move his natural affections : and in this constituted order of means, the sovereignty, grace, and power of God give life to the dispensation of his word. We have to deal with rational beings, capable of apprehending our testimony, and answerable for their reception of it. Let it therefore be comprehensive, connected, and unfettered ; and we shall never be left without a witness from God.

We have enlarged upon the subject of this section, from the decided conviction, that a high standard of Christian doctrine, scripturally laid down and practically enforced, is indissolubly connected with a corresponding elevation of Christian holiness and Christian privilege. No efficient Ministry will ever be found, where the system of public instruction is lowered beneath the sacred standard. An excessive caution in fencing and guarding our statements, or an indecisive and sparing exhibition of Christian doctrine, will not be honoured with the Divine blessing, and will leave us dependent on our own energy for its success. Whereas, the more simple and unsophisticated, the more full and unctious our views—the larger effusion of Divine influence may be anticipated. It is far more easy to bring our people to a certain stage of preliminary advancement, than to carry them one step beyond it. ‘ In these truths which we have ventured to present,’ (as Cotton Mather observes) ‘ there are the articles, which the church either stands or falls withall. They will be the life of your Ministry, nor can the power of godliness be maintained without them. The loss of these truths will render a Ministry insipid and unfruitful ; and procure this complaint about the shepherds—“ The diseased ye have not strengthened, neither have ye brought again that which was driven

away.”¹ The powerful influence of such a system of doctrinal instruction, as has been here recommended, consists not in the talent of eloquence, but in the “simplicity and godly sincerity,” with which it is conducted. Its main character may be comprised in one short sentence—“Christ is all and in all.” He is not only exhibited in the picture, but in the foreground—as the principal figure—where every part of the picture is subordinated, to give him that prominence and that effect, which attract the eye and the heart exclusively to him.²

This subject may be fitly concluded with the striking exhortation of Bishop Reynolds—‘Studiously and conscientiously apply yourselves to this heavenly skill of spiritual preaching. *So convince of sin*—the guilt, the stain, the pollution of it, the curse and malediction, whereunto the soul is exposed by it—that your hearers may be awakened, and humbled, and effectually forewarned “to flee from the wrath to come.” So convince of the all-sufficient righteousness and unsearchable riches of Christ, the excellency of his knowledge, the immeasurableness of his love, the preciousness of his promises, “the fellowship of his sufferings, the power

¹ Mather’s Student and Pastor, p. 185.

² Bowles gives some cogent reasons for this full exhibition of Christ in our Ministry.—1. Because in him is our only hope of salvation, Acts iv. 12; John xiv. 6. 2. Because he is the scope of the whole Scripture, the whole range of truth being employed—either, (like the Mosaic œconomy,) “to bring us to him”—or to describe him as if before our eyes—or to lead us to communion with him by the outward and inward means—or lastly, that we might walk worthy of him. 3. Because all the first Ministers of the Gospel unite in giving him the pre-eminence in their Ministrations—John the Baptist, (John i. 29.) Philip, (Acts viii. 5.) Paul, (Acts ix. 20. 1 Cor. ii. Eph. iii. 8.) 4. Because all our works, except they be grafted on him, are no better than splendid sins. John xv. 4, 5.—Past. Evang. Lib. ii. c. 8. “Christum illi soli annunciant vere, et uti oportet, qui in illo solo docent omnem spem salutis humanæ repositam, qui per illum solum agnoscunt divitias gratiæ Divinæ ad nos derivari.” Dav. in Col. i. 28.

of his resurrection," the beauties of his holiness, the easiness of his yoke, the sweetness of his peace, the joy of his salvation, the hope of his glory—that the hearts of your hearers may burn within them, and they may "fly, like doves unto their windows," for shelter and sanctuary into the arms of such a Redeemer, who "is able" and willing "to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him"—that they may with all ready obedience, and by the constraining power of the love of Christ, yield up themselves to the government of this Prince of Peace, by whom "the Prince of this world is judged, and cast out," his "works destroyed," and we for this end "bought with a price," that we should "not be our own," but his that bought us, nor "live any longer unto ourselves, but unto him that loved us, and died for us, and rose again."

"*Preach Christ Jesus the Lord.*" "Determine to know nothing among your people, but Christ crucified." Let his name and grace, his Spirit and love, triumph in the midst of all your sermons. Let your great end be, to glorify him in the heart, to render him amiable and precious in the eyes of his people, to lead them to him, as a sanctuary to protect them, a propitiation to reconcile them, a treasure to enrich them, a physician to heal them, an advocate to present them and their services to God, as wisdom to counsel them, as righteousness to justify, as sanctification to renew, as redemption to save. Let Christ *be the diamond to shine in the bosom of all your sermons.*¹

¹ Works, pp. 1039, 1040. An uniform edition of his works has been lately presented to the public, dedicated to the present Bishop of London. The Christian Remembrancer (a periodical, whose general system is opposed to this view of Christian doctrine) justly ranks Bishop Reynolds as 'one of the most eminent among the Divines of the seventeenth century;' and marks this edition of his works, as 'forming a most valuable accession to our stores of sound and masculine theology.' November, 1826.

SECTION II.

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

‘**PERHAPS** the theory of the Gospel was never better understood since the Apostles’ days, than it is at present. But many, *who preach it*, or who profess it, seem to lay too much stress upon a systematical scheme of sentiments, and too little upon that life and power, that vital, experimental, and practical influence, which form the character and regulate the conduct, of an established Christian.’¹ The fulness and simplicity, the connected and unfettered character of our ministrations, will enlighten our people only with a cold and uninfluential knowledge, except an experimental character be added to interest and affect the heart. Our statements may embrace accuracy of detail, and correctness of proportion : but without an unctious spirit, and an application of the didactic system to the different feelings and sympathies of the heart, they will be unproductive. Not that we should be always dealing with certain trains of spiritual exercises ; but that we should enter with minuteness and consistency into the varied feelings, difficulties, conflicts, and privileges, which belong to what Scougal aptly calls ‘the life of God in the soul of man.’

The connexion of this Section with the preceding is obvious. For what is Christian experience, but the influence of doctrinal truth upon the mind. If we are strangers to the Scriptural character of God, we must be unacquainted with those exercises, that connect the heart with him. The preference however that some

¹ Newton’s Life of Grimshaw. p. 65.

Christians feel for experimental preaching, as being descriptive of their feelings, is obviously grounded upon misconception. Indistinct doctrinal preaching, or even accurate views in a dry didactic mode of communication, must be both uninteresting and uninfluential. But an intelligent apprehension and statement of truth from the preacher's heart naturally flow with experimental vitality to the hearts of his people.

Much caution and Christian wisdom however is here required to adopt this style of preaching with advantage. It includes the different cases of our people, the various degrees of impression under the Ministry of the word, the power of conviction, the danger of stifling it, and the best methods of cherishing, deepening, and directing its influence. The power of temptation in its diversified operations is a material part of the subject, both as regards the "captivity" of the multitude "at the will of Satan,"¹ or his active and too successful influence over Christian hearts. The incessant working of native principles of corruption, falling in with the grand designs of the enemy, and materially aiding his operations, need to be most correctly delineated. And hence will arise some important rules for the assurance of Christian sincerity, and for a scriptural "trial of the spirits, whether they be of God."² The different offices of the Holy Spirit, "helping infirmities" in prayer, convincing, enlightening, consoling, strengthening every part of the soul, imprinting the Divine image, and bearing witness to his own work—these will form full and interesting subjects for detailed exposition. The connexion of the work of the Holy Spirit with the exhibition of the love of Christ, his offices, and the

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 26.

² 1 John iv. 1.

mutual interest and communion subsisting between him and his church, in every part and in every member, will present the grand subject of the atonement in its vivid application, and in all its experimental power of consolation. This view of the scheme of the Gospel widely differs from the dry and abstract statement of orthodox doctrine. Its life consists not in the exposition, but in the application of the doctrine to the heart for the suitable purposes for which it was ordained—the sanctification and comfort of the sincere Christian. Subjects of this character may occasionally and at seasonable opportunities form entire subjects of our pulpit discourses, though perhaps it is more important, that they should give a general tone and character to our Ministry. Exhortations however to caution and watchfulness must be judiciously introduced, with a plentiful admixture of Scripture proof and illustration, in order to obviate the just imputation of enthusiasm in ourselves, and the real danger of it in our people.

We need scarcely remark, that this interesting style of preaching presupposes a personal acquaintance with these exercises, and an individual interest in their privileges, in order to lay them open experimentally, and, by the grace of God, successfully, in the course of our Ministrations. It is experience alone that qualifies for usefulness, by enabling the Minister to touch the tender strings of the heart, and to suit his instructions to the different cases, trials, and circumstances that belong to the subjects of his Ministration.¹ ‘When he has’ (as Witsius beautifully observes) ‘not

¹ ‘Any little knowledge of my own heart, and of the Lord’s dealings with my own soul, hath helped me much in my sermons; and I have observed, that I have been apt to deliver that which I had experienced, in a more feeling and earnest manner, than other matters.’ Brown’s Life and Remains.

only heard something, but seen, and handled, and tasted of the word of life, and has been taught, not by mere speculation, but by actual experience, what he has thus found out; he safely inculcates, from the assured persuasions of his mind, and applies to every case, from his own knowledge of what is suitable to each.' ¹ The Christian Minister may therefore expect his full portion of painful and perplexing exercises. For not only does he require them to promote his humiliation of soul (a most needful and encouraging preparation for Ministerial success); but also to "give him the tongue of the learned, that he may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."² It is almost needful, that he should have a taste more or less of the innumerable trials, fears, complaints, and temptations of private Christians, to enable him to prescribe the specific remedy for each varying complaint, and to exercise a spirit of Christian sympathy with them all.

An occasional and judicious reference to our own experience, will add considerable interest to our preaching. The Apostle introduces such reference with considerable effect in his Apostolic letters to his churches.³ And when we can tell our people—"We have passed with you through the same tribulation, conflicted with the same difficulties, fallen into the same snares, and overcome the same temptations"—this gives a reciprocity of interest and excitement, that leads them in the midst of present distresses to "thank God" for us, "and take courage" for themselves. Addresses of this character flow from the heart to the heart with a direct passage and immediate effect; and they bring a warmth and impressiveness, compared

¹ De Vero Theologo.

² Isaiah l. 4.

³ Rom. vii. Phil. iii. 1 Tim. i. 12—15. et alia.

with which cold speculation or studied eloquence is most insipid. The difference is that of the way-post, which directs the traveller, while itself remains unmoved; and the living guide, who becomes a companion to sympathize with, enliven, and uphold his fellow. Great discretion however is requisite to regulate the frequency and seasonableness of these personal references. There would otherwise be an immediate danger of "preaching ourselves" instead of "Christ Jesus the Lord." There would also be the appearance of setting up our own experience as a standard for our people; than which nothing could be more injurious, as an occasion of ridicule to the enemies of the Gospel, and as a serious hinderance to the sincere inquirer, by putting the servant in his master's place—man in the place of God.

Most valuable assistance is here derived from our pastoral Ministry. In commenting upon the Epistle to the Galatians, we might present a faithful portraiture of the sin and danger of self-righteousness. Yet an observation of the diversified workings of this subtle principle in our people would give us the materials of a more close and individual application. The sketches of the different classes of our hearers drawn from the most experimental divines, will have far less of conviction to the sinner, and suitable adaptation to the Christian, than those which we have drawn from real life in the routine of pastoral intercourse.

The advantages of this style of preaching are various and important. Not to speak of the echo that it finds in the hearts of our people, we may remark, *that it gives a peculiar flexibility to our Ministry, and enables us to apply appropriate remedies to the several individual cases. It assists us also in the right use of our*

own experience, not making it the standard of our Ministry, nor on the other hand regarding it as a cabinet of curiosities for private inspection—but working it up as useful materials for our ordinary addresses. This character of Ministry is also usually attended with a peculiar blessing. ‘I always find,’ (said the late Mr. Richmond) ‘that, when I speak from the inward feelings of my own heart, with respect to the works of inbred corruption, earnest desire after salvation, a sense of my own nothingness, and my Saviour’s fulness; the people hear, feel, are edified, and strengthened. Whereas, if I descend to mere formal or cold explanation of particulars, which do not affect the great question.—“What must I do to be saved”—my hearers and I grow languid and dull together, and no good is done.’¹ Indeed the study of the Apostolical Epistles will mark this style of preaching to be most consonant with the inspired model. What interesting details of lively experience are brought before us in Rom. viii.! How different is the view exhibited in that wonderful portion of Holy Writ, from a dry statement of abstract truth, whether doctrinal or preceptive! It is the direct influence of Evangelical doctrine and precept in the speaking testimony of the love, peace, holy fellowship, conflict, joy, and triumph of the consistent believer.

Another use of this mode of preaching is *its suitability to all Christians alike*. “As in water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man.”² The outlines of experience resemble the features of the human countenance, which (though so varied and modified by constitution, education, or personal habits, that each may be considered to be an original) in all

¹ Richmond’s Life, p. 184.

² Prov. xxvii. 19.

leading particulars are invariably the same. Identity of character is preserved in the midst of an endless diversity of feature. All Christians, being, according to the promise,¹ under the same Divine teaching, will be taught substantially the same lessons. And though there will be considerable differences in the degrees of their proficiency, and individualities proper to the several cases, arising from the course of human instruction, or incidental circumstances; yet the same system of spiritual and experimental instructions will equally apply to all. The young and the more advanced will be alike profited by the detailed sketch of the ways and means, in which the principles and actings of the Divine life are implanted, cherished, and maintained. Nor will the unbeliever be left without his share of benefit. Conviction may flash upon his mind—‘If this be Christianity, I have yet to learn it, to feel it, and to enjoy it.’ Who knoweth, but such a moment of conviction may give birth to a desire, which, when formed into a prayer, may prove the commencement of a new creation on his heart—a new era in his life—such as will find its full scope and influence only in the boundless expanse of eternity?

SECTION III.

PRACTICAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

THE Gospel may be preached in all the accuracy of doctrinal statement, and in all the richness of experimental comfort, and yet may be only as “a very lovely song of one, that hath a pleasant voice.”² Its

¹ Isaiah liv. 13.

² Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

practical details are often a ground of offence, where its doctrinal expositions have been listened to with interest, and even its spiritual enjoyments been tasted with self-delusive delight.¹ It is more easy to deal with a darkened understanding, and with excited feelings, than with a corrupt will. And if the work of the Ministry were to end with the understanding and affections, without any corresponding practical obligations, the message would be far less offensive to the natural heart. But the Christian Minister will feel, that the "declaration of all the counsel of God" would be as incomplete without a direct and detailed enforcement of practical obligation, as if all reference to doctrine or experience were totally omitted.² Let these three departments of preaching be exhibited in their mutual connexion, dependence, and use; and the head, heart, and life, will be simultaneously influenced.

The connexion of *practical with doctrinal preaching* is of the utmost importance. To inculcate Christian duty upon the basis of Christian doctrine—to represent it as the natural exercise of love and gratitude, arising from the believing apprehension of Redeeming love—to exhibit the operation of Christian motives flowing from the doctrine of the cross—to mark the union of the soul with Christ, as the only source of holiness, and to trace the acceptance of whatever by this union we are enabled to perform, solely to His atonement and meditation—to connect all relative duties with the doctrine of Christ³—this was the apostolical system of practical

¹ See Matt. xiii. 20. John v. 35. Heb. vi. 5.

² See Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

³ Such as the duties of husbands, Eph. v. 25.—wives, 22—servants, Eph. vi. 5. Col. iii. 24. Tit. ii. 10—subjects, 1 Pet. ii. 13—25—evil speaking Tit. iii. 2—7. The illative particle (*therefore*) significantly illustrates this connexion and dependence. Rom. xii. 1. Ephes. iv. 1. Col. iii. 1, &c.

preaching—the only efficient mode of influencing the heart, life, and conduct. Bishop Horsley's testimony is most decisive on this point—'The practice of religion will always thrive, in proportion as its doctrines are generally understood and firmly received; and the practice will degenerate and decay, in proportion as the doctrine is misunderstood and neglected. It is true therefore, that it is the great duty of a preacher of the Gospel to press the practice of its precepts upon the consciences of men. But then it is equally true, that it is his duty to enforce this practice in a particular way, namely, by inculcating its doctrines. The motives, which the revealed doctrines furnish, are the only motives he has to do with, and *the only motives by which religious duty can be effectually enforced.*'¹

Bishop Horne has well observed—'To preach practical sermons as they are called—i. e. sermons upon virtues and vices—without inculcating those great Scripture truths of redemption and grace, and which alone can excite and enable us to forsake sin, and follow after righteousness; what is it, but to put together the wheels, and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the spring, which is to make them all go?'² In another place he remarks to the same effect, with his happy powers of illustration—'One thing indeed we do affirm, because we can prove it from Scripture, that whoever preaches and enforces moral duties, without justification and sanctification preceding, may as well declaim upon the advantages of walking, to a man that can neither stir hand nor foot: such is the natural impotence of the soul to do any good thing, till it is justified and sanctified. Let the declamation be ever so elegant, St. Peter's plain address, I suppose,

¹ Charges, p. 10.

² Bishop Horne's Essays, p. 162.

would be worth ten thousand of them, to a cripple—
 “In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”
 Such is the difference between an Ethical divine and
 a Christian preacher !’¹

The Scripture admirably illustrates this practical exposition of Christian doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity is stated in connexion with Christian worship, and with the exercise of love to God.² From the doctrine of the incarnation is drawn at one time an arrow of conviction;³ at other times it is the motive for humility,⁴ love,⁵ or obedience.⁶ The atonement is displayed, as the principle of hatred of sin,⁷ and love to the Saviour.⁸ The doctrine of election (as we have lately remarked⁹) is connected stately with personal holiness, or as an incentive to persevering diligence.¹⁰ The Sovereignty and freeness of grace do not grant allowance of Antinomian ease, but give excitement to laborious activity;¹¹ so that in every

¹ Bishop Horne on preaching the Gospel, pp. 7, 8. One more testimony may be added from an eloquent living writer—‘A morality more elevated and pure, than is to be met with in the pages of Seneca or Epictetus, will breathe through your sermons founded on a basis, which every understanding can comprehend, and enforced by sanctions, which nothing but the utmost stupidity can despise—a morality, of which the love of God, and a devoted attachment to the Redeemer, are the plastic soul, which, pervading every limb, and expressing itself in every lineament of the new creature, gives it a beauty all his own. As it is the genuine fruit of just and affecting views of Divine truth, you will never sever it from its parent stock, nor indulge the fruitless hope of leading men to holiness, without strongly imbuing them with the spirit of the Gospel. Truth and holiness are, in the Christian system, so intimately allied, that the warm and faithful inculcation of the one, lays the only foundation for the other.’ Hall’s Sermon, p. 39.

² Matt. xxviii. 19. 2 Thess. iii. 5.

³ Ye have killed the Holy One. Acts iii. 14, 15.

⁴ Phil. ii. 4—6.

⁵ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

⁶ Matt. xvii. 5. Acts iii. 22, 23.

⁷ Rom. v. vi.

⁸ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

⁹ See p. 334.

¹⁰ 2 Pet. i. 10.

¹¹ Phil. ii. 12, 13.



view the connexion of doctrine and practice is a prominent part of a Scriptural Ministration of the word.

Thus the doctrines of the Gospel, not only explain the nature and inculcate the obligation, but are themselves the principles—nay the only principles—of holiness. We must live every moment by faith; and as we live, we shall love—overcome the world—crucify sin—delight in the service of God. No mere precepts will extirpate the natural love of sin, or infuse this new bias in the heart. The doctrine of faith is the appointed instrument for effecting the mighty change in the exhibition of Christ as the source of life, and the detailed enforcement of Christian practice as the active exercises of this life.¹ We say—*detailed enforcement*—because the Apostle does not satisfy himself with a general recommendation of holiness—but follows it out into the distinct enumeration of particular duties, and reproof of particular sins, as his knowledge of the state of his people dictated to him.² And this we conceive to be a most important part of the Apostolical preaching, as the model for our imitation.

The connexion of *practical with experimental preaching* is also of considerable moment. An exclusive standard of experimental preaching, and an unvaried representation of Christian privileges, irrespective of practical obligations, would be a most unfaithful and sickly dispensation of our Divine commission. It is most important to show, that Christian privilege is a principle—not of inactive indulgence—but of habitual devotedness to the work of God. It is, when the Christian is realizing his interest in an heavenly

¹ See an admirable sermon on this subject preached at the Visitation of the Archdeacon of Wells. By Ralph Lyon, M. A.

² See Rom. xii. Eph. iv. v. throughout.

portion, when a sense of pardon is applied to his soul, when the seal of the Spirit is impressed upon his heart, when "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" is spiritually apprehended—it is under the influence of these enlivening delights, that the grateful inquiry springs—"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"¹ The detail of Christian duty is the practical expression of his gratitude for experimental privileges. Relative situations and circumstances are now improved for increased activity in the discharge of every social obligation—"that he may adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things." Thus (as has been beautifully observed) 'Christ is the soul *of duty, of grace, of privilege.* Christ is the light and warmth, which cheer and animate to exertion. It is the promise and not the precept; it is encouragement and not exaction; it is grace and not nature, which consecrate a course of moral beauty and blessing, and convince the believer, that, whether grace is to be exercised, or duty discharged, he is eminently "God's workmanship," "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."² The Scriptural standard would therefore constrain us to preach doctrines practically, and practise doctrinally; omitting neither, but stating neither independent of the other, or unconnected with their influence upon experimental religion. We are sometimes on one side said to deny or to under-rate the importance of practical religion, by insisting upon the full statement of the doctrines of the Gospel, distinct, but not separate, from practice. But 'how' (remarks Bishop Horne) 'we can be said to deny the existence of moral duties, because we preach faith,

¹ Psalm cxvi. 12.

² Budd on Infant Baptism, p. 446.

the root from whence they spring, I know not ; unless he that plants a vine, does by that action deny the existence of grapes. The fruit receives its goodness from the tree, not the tree from the fruit, which does not make the tree good, but shows it to be so. No works receive all their goodness from faith, not faith from works ; which do not themselves justify, but show a prior justification of the soul that produces them.' ¹

But while some are exclusive in their doctrinal statements, others are equally so in their practical enforcements. They do not see the necessity for the details of Christian practice ; or they consider them as entrenching upon the unconditional freeness of the Gospel covenant. They deem the abstract exposition of Christian doctrine sufficient for the discharge of their commission ; whence they conceive Christian practice will necessarily flow, without the superfluous aid of hortatory persuasions. But were not the doctrines of the Gospel as powerful in the Apostles' hands as in our own ? Yet did they not leave the tree to grow of itself, and put forth its leaves, buddings, and fruit without active care and nurture. Who so minute in his detail of practical duties, as he that is most full in his statements of Evangelical doctrine ? The latter chapters of St. Paul's Epistles (as we have before hinted) expound the practical obligations in immediate connexion with the most enlarged display of Evangelical doctrine ; so that a misguided commentator,

¹ Bishop Horne on Preaching the Gospel, pp. 5—11. It is almost needless to remark the consonance of this view with the truly Scriptural, but deeply humbling, doctrine of Article xiii. Upon this view Augustine justly denominated the moral virtues of pagan philosophers, 'splendida peccata.' 'Per fidem venitur ad opera ; non per opera venitur ad fidem'—was one of the accurate and sententious aphorisms of the old Divines.

or preacher, would find himself in considerable perplexity, either in dismissing his exposition of his Epistles at the close of his doctrinal system, or in pursuing the practical parts with a disrelish, and wrong bias upon his own mind. Are not the closing chapters of the Epistles as component parts of the Divine revelation as the previous statements? And can they from their position be conceived to belong to any other dispensation than the New Testament in its most free and extended form? Did they not form a part of Apostolical instruction to professing churches? It is to be feared, that the real operative principle in many cases, is a disrelish to holiness; which, though tolerable in general statements, when pressed home in detail, is uncongenial to the taste either of the Minister or the congregation. In conformity to "the wisdom given unto their beloved brother Paul," and manifested in his writings, the other Apostles interwove their practical exhortations into the thread of their doctrinal instructions; thus showing their sense of the importance of raising a goodly superstructure upon the solid foundation of Scriptural truth.¹ Indeed the wholesome doctrine of Christ must be considered to include the fruitfulness as well as the consolations of the Gospel; so that the separation of the doctrine from the holiness of the Gospel is as defective a statement, as the disunion of holiness from

¹ "Upon this model"—(as Leighton admirably observes) "ought the Ministers of the Gospel to form their preaching—Ministers are not to instruct only, or to exhort only, but to do both. To exhort men to holiness and the duties of the Christian life, without instructing them in the doctrine of faith, is to build a house without a foundation. And on the other side, to *instruct the mind in the knowledge of Divine things, and neglect the pressing of that practice and power of godliness, which is the undivided companion of true faith, is to forget the building, that ought to be raised upon that foundation once laid, which is likewise a point of very great folly.* On 1 Pet. ii. 11.

the doctrine of the cross ; it being as much the design of Christ to restore his church to the image as to the favour of God. The effect of this semi-evangelical Ministry will be found in a luxuriant crop of stony-ground hearers, full of notions, excited in their feelings, forward in their profession ; but unsubdued in their habits and tempers, equally destitute of the root, and of the present life, activity, fruitfulness, enjoyment, perseverance, of the spiritual principle. Nor is this tone of Ministry less hurtful to the sincere professor of the Gospel. Where the inculcation of habitual self-examination, and a well-ordered conversation upon Scriptural principles is neglected, the light of orthodox profession will partake more of a speculative than of an influential character ; and the “ knowledge that puffeth up ” will be often substituted for the “ charity that edifieth.” Let not therefore the dreaded imputation of being thought moral preachers, deter us from inculcating the requirements, as well as illustrating the doctrines, of the Gospel. Practical statements are consistent with the most unfettered display of Christian doctrine, which indeed, separate from these statements—is deprived of its adorning, and enervated in its effectiveness.¹

¹ It was said of Mr. Robinson, by his Biographer—that “ he was eminently a practical preacher ; generally he had much of Evangelical doctrine in his sermons ; sometimes he was experimental ; but he was always practical. Never did he discuss a doctrine without drawing from it strict practical conclusions, and closely applying them to the conscience ; never did he detail Christian experience without specifically pointing out its practical tendencies : often he entered very minutely and particularly into a full and heart-searching developement of distinct parts of duty ; insomuch that some of his hearers, who did not greatly approve his doctrinal opinions, were led highly to extol his Ministry, as being replete with useful family instructions.” Vaughan's Life, pp. 309, 310.

SECTION IV.

APPLICATORY PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

BISHOP DAVENANT remarks, that ‘the philosopher’s maxim—that every action is done by the touch—has a principal place in the sacred action of preaching;’¹ the chief use of which consists in its direct and suitable application to the hearts and consciences of our people. This application is indeed the life of preaching—the best mode of exciting interest—and (what is more important) the grand instrument of conviction. It is thus, that we pass over the lesser matters by the way, to hasten to our main design—“the saving of ourselves, and of them that hear us.”² ‘For this end we must show them’ (as Archbishop Secker reminds us) ‘from first to last, that we are not merely saying good things in their presence; but directing what we say to them personally, as a matter which concerns them beyond expression. More general discourses they often want skill to take home to themselves, and oftener yet, inclination; so they sit all the while stupidly regardless of what is delivered. Therefore we must interest them in it, by calling upon them to observe, by asking them questions to answer silently in their own mind, by every prudent incitement to follow us closely.’³ The character of Massillon’s preaching is said to have been so pointed, that no one, after hearing him, stopped to criticise or admire. Each carried away the arrow fastened in his heart, considering him-

¹ Dav. in Col. i. 21.² 1 Tim. iv. 16. ‘Semper ad eventum festinat.’ Horace.³ Charges, p. 272.

self to be the person addressed, and having neither time, thought, nor inclination to apply it to others.¹

It is too much to expect, that our hearers will apply to themselves such unpalatable truths. Indeed so unnatural is this habit of personal application, that most will fit the doctrine to any one but themselves; and their general and unmeaning commendation too plainly bespeaks the absence of personal interest and concern. The Preacher must make the application himself.² The “goads and nails” must not be laid by—as if the posts would knock them in—but “fastened by the masters of assemblies.”³ To insist therefore upon general truths without particular explanations—or to explain them without application to the different classes of our hearers—or to give important directions without clearing the way for the improvement of them—this is (not according to the original design of our Ministry) to lay the truths at every man’s door, to press it upon every man’s heart, and to “give

¹ Lavater’s practice was—to fix on certain persons in his congregation, as representatives of the different classes of his hearers—to keep these persons in his eye in the composition of his sermons—and to endeavour to mould his subjects so as to meet their respective cases. Mr. Cecil adopted this admirable rule with much effectiveness.

² See 2 Sam. xii. 1—7. When John preached generally, “Herod heard him gladly:” when he came to particulars of application—“It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife”—the preacher lost his head. ‘The Minister’ (as an excellent old Divine observes) ‘should desire to have that knowledge of all his hearers, that he may be able to speak as particularly to every one as is possible. (Jer. vi. 27). Though he may not make private faults public, or so touch the sin, as to note and disgrace the sinner; yet he may apply his reproofs particularly, so as the party himself that is guilty may know and feel himself touched with the reproof. We must in preaching aim as directly as we can at him, whom we desire to profit. Our doctrine must be as a garment, fitted for the body it is made for; a garment that is fit for every body, is fit for nobody. Paul saith of himself, that in his preaching he laboured to *admonish every man, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*’ Hildersham on John iv. Lect. lxxx.

³ Eccles. xii. 11.

to them their portion of meat in due season.”¹ Such a tone of preaching but feebly illustrates the power of the word, as “sharper than a two-edged sword—piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.”² Nor is it endued with any persuasive force, as the instrument to “compel sinners to come in” to the Gospel.³ Our hearers will only meet us with a heartless assent to our instructions, as if they were ready to reply—‘How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?’⁴

Individuality of application formed the nerve of the preaching of the Jewish Prophets,⁵ and of our Lord’s addresses both to classes of men and to individual cases. His reproofs to the Scribes and Pharisees, to the Sadducees and Herodians, had distinct reference to the particular sins, by which they were severally distinguished.⁶ In his treatment of the young ruler,⁷ and the woman of Samaria,⁸ he avoided general remark, to point his instructions to the indulgent habit of sin—‘talking to their thoughts,’ (as a sensible writer has observed in the case of the young man) ‘as we do to each other’s words.’⁹ Peter’s hearers “were pricked to the heart” by this applicatory address.¹⁰

We cannot but observe, that nothing of this kind is found in the instructions of the heathen sages.—Plato, Aristotle, and Tully, dealt out to their disciples cold and indefinite descriptions of certain

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 15. with Luke xii. 42.

² Heb. iv. 12.

³ Luke xiv. 23.

⁴ Job vi. 25. It was observed of Philip Henry, that “he did not shoot the arrow of the word *over the heads* of his audience, in the flourishes of affected rhetoric, nor *under their feet* by homely expressions, but *to their hearts, in close and lively application.*” Life, p. 59.

⁵ Isaiah lviii. 1. Micah iii. 8.

⁶ Comp. Matt. xxii. xxiii.

⁷ Matt. xix. 16—22.

⁸ John iv. 7—26.

⁹ Benson’s Life of Christ, p. 300.

¹⁰ Acts ii. 22—37.

virtues and vices ; but without any practical application of their theories, or any endeavours to impress the mind with personal conviction. Horace and Juvenal attempted something in this way ; but in a spirit more likely to excite ridicule and disgust, than to open the avenues of the heart to conviction. Their system indeed afforded no master-springs to excite feeling or principle. It was a mass of inert matter, without life, motion, or effectiveness. Such probably also were the instructions of the Jewish Teachers—consisting chiefly (as the Evangelist's contrast seems to imply), of spiritless disputations, without any attempt to influence the understanding, affections, or conscience.¹ Indeed what more could be expected from discourses drawn from the traditions of men, rather than from the unadulterated source of the oracles of God ?²

The exigency of the case demands this applicatory preaching. Nothing rouses to consideration, but the sight of a man's own heart laid open before him. Until he feels the Preacher aim the blow at himself, he will continue the customary routine of attendance without uneasiness, and therefore without profit—so important is it to reduce preaching from vague generalities to a real, tangible, individual character—coming home to every man's business, and even to his bosom. The general sermons, that are preached to every body, in fact are preached to no body. They will therefore suit the congregations of the last century, or in a foreign land, as well as the people before our eyes. 'Such discourses' (as Bishop Stillingfleet remarks) 'have commonly little effect on the people's minds. But if any thing moves them, it is particular application as to such things, in which their consciences are con-

¹ Matt. vii. 29.

² Mark vii. 1—7.

cerned.’¹ We must therefore preach *to* our people, as well as *before* them. ‘The conscience of the audience’ should ‘feel the hand of the Preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The Preacher, who aims at doing good, will endeavour above all things to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump—will have no other effect, than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and, amid the innumerable millions which surround him, he will “mourn apart.” It is thus the Christian Minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers upon himself.’²

¹ Duties and Rights of the Parochial Clergy, p. 31. ‘General declarations against vice and sin rouse men to consider and look about them; but they often want effect, because they only raise confused apprehensions of things, and undeterminate propensions to action; the which usually, before men thoroughly perceive or resolve what they should practise, do decay and vanish. As he that cries out ‘fire’ doth stir up people, and inspireth them with a kind of hovering tendency every way, yet no man thence to purpose moveth, until he be distinctly informed, where the mischief is; (then do they, who apprehend themselves concerned, run hastily to oppose it) so, till we particularly discern, where our offences lie, till we distinctly know the heinous nature and the mischievous consequences of them—we scarce will effectually apply ourselves to correct them. Whence it is requisite, that men should be particularly acquainted with their sins, and by proper arguments be dissuaded from them.’ Barrow’s Sermons.

² Hall’s Sermons, &c. pp. 23, 24. George Herbert’s ‘Parson was used to preach with particularizing of his speech;—*for particulars ever touch and awake more than generals.*’ Chap. vii. ‘Let every preacher so preach, as every wise preacher ought to preach; not only *unto men* or *unto men’s ears*, but *into men’s ears*, and *into men’s hearts* also, if possible. It is easier to find

But this applicatory mode should pervade the whole system of our Ministry, and extend to the consolatory as well as to the awakening exhortations of the Gospel. It should direct us to apply the general promises to specific cases; as for instance, the promises of Divine forgiveness to every distinct case of penitence and faith—the declarations of Divine direction, support, or comfort, to each particular emergency, as if they had been made for it alone. The property of a good portrait well describes a good sermon—that it looks directly at all, though placed in different situations, as if it were glancing with a particular application to each—“*I have a message from God unto thee.*”¹

Bishop Burnet gives some admirable remarks upon application at the close of our discourses.² “The doctrine of the sermon requires wisdom—the application, earnestness. The one needs a clear head—the other a warm heart. The discussion of our subjects must be in a straight line. Considerable latitude is

out a sermon to preach *unto the people*, than to find out this skill and wisdom, how to be able to distil or preach a sermon *into the people.*’ More’s *Wise Preacher*.

¹ Judges iii. 20.

² Pastoral Care, ch. ix. on Preaching. Claude’s observations, with Mr. Simeon’s notes appended, may also be referred to with advantage. Mr. Alleine’s preaching beautifully illustrated the ‘heart and soul,’ which the Bishop would bring to this point.—‘So loth was he to labour in vain, and to pass from one discourse to another, as one unconcerned whether he had sown any good seeds or no on the hearts of his hearers; that in the close of his applicatory part on any text, he ever expressed his great unwillingness to leave that subject without some assurances that he had not “fought” in that spiritual warfare, “as one that beateth the air;” when also he expressed his great fear, lest he should, after all his most importunate warnings, leave them as he found them. And here, with how much holy-taking rhetoric did he frequently expostulate the case with impenitent sinners, in words too many to mention, and yet too weighty to be forgotten; vehemently urging them to come to some good resolve, before he and they parted, and to make their choice either of life or death!’ Alleine’s *Life and Letters*.

allowable in the application. Many points may have been purposely omitted in the course of discussion, to be reserved with more effect for the application. Here also is afforded an opportunity of bringing home to the conscience of the audience many things which, in the progress of the sermon, *were perhaps delivered in the abstract.*"¹

This applicatory part of our discourses will therefore furnish ample field for the exercise of natural talent and eloquence, diversified according to the character of the discussion. In *historical* subjects, it may be drawn either from some prominent feature of the record, or from some collateral circumstances, connected immediately with it, or with its context. In *doctrinal* subjects, it would be usually deduced in the way of inference, as illustrating the practical tendency of the doctrine, or the experimental privileges arising out of it. The application of a *practical* subject would naturally follow or flow from the detailed exposition of Christian duty; suggesting for conviction, an inquiry into our influential acknowledgment of the obligation; and for encouragement, an exhibition of its reasonableness and advantages, together with the most effectual methods of overcoming the hinderances of a corrupt nature, tempting world, and powerful enemy. The application of *typical or parabolical subjects* would be sought from the antitype or doctrine to which the figure was related. *Prophetical texts* require considerable care and caution, for their just application to practical and experimental purposes. In the prophecies *relating to Christ*, the path lies in the direct track of evangelical preaching. The prophecies *relating to the church*—whether ful-

¹ Blair's Lectures.

filled or unfulfilled, whether referring to her present or prospective privileges and tribulations—admit of most important personal application, in our interest in her promises, our sympathy in her trials, our anticipations of the glorious prospects of her millennial state, or our danger from judgments impending over her. The *prophetic declarations concerning the world*, give full scope for exhibiting their connexion with the interests of the church, and the faithfulness of God in her defence, as the strongest support of faith, and the most powerful excitements of peace and love, to humble ourselves before his power, and to seek a lot among his obedient and happy people.

The preceding remarks, however, chiefly suppose the *application to be left to the close of sermon*. But Dr. Doddridge's advice was—'Remember, that the final application, reflections, or inferences, *are not the only places*, in which to introduce your addresses to the converted and unconverted.'¹ Indeed serious disadvantages belong to the constant practice of this scheme. The formality and routine of the address detract from its powers; while sudden and unexpected appeals—well-directed and naturally arising from the subject—are more calculated to awaken the slumbering interest. Add to which—the appeal to conscience too often falls powerless upon wearied attention; or the preacher's mind, in the sight or anticipation of this, passes over the materials for conviction with indigested haste. The method of perpetual application, *where the subject will admit of it*, is probably therefore best calculated for effect—applying each head distinctly; and addressing separate classes at the close with suitable exhortation, warning, or encouragement. 'You have

¹ Doddridge's Preaching Lectures, Lect. x.

been half an hour,' (said the late Mr. Robinson to a brother clergyman) 'without one word directly aimed at the conscience.'¹ The epistle to the Hebrews furnishes a most complete model of this scheme.—Argumentative throughout, connected in the train of reasoning, and logical in its deductions—each successive link is interrupted by some personal and forcible conviction, while the continuity of the chain is preserved entire to the end. Thus the superiority of Christ to the angels (the first step of the argument) is improved as a motive for attention to the Gospel, and a warning against the neglect of it.² His superiority to Moses next suggest an encouraging excitement to steadfastness; ³ while the mention of his name naturally introduces the history of the fathers of the people, to whom the inspired penman was addressing himself; and thus opens a fruitful matter for solemn caution and animating encouragement, in the view of the character and privileges of the typical people.⁴ Passing onward—the display of his superior excellency to the Levitical priesthood is varied with practical exhortation, fresh views of evangelical privilege, or a new and cheering glance at the all-sufficiency of his work.⁵ The whole system of the Jewish economy which succeeds—as the exhibition of the incomparably more substantial privileges of the Gospel—is intermixed with heart-stirring motives to the exercise of faith,

¹ Life, p. 217. His own Scripture characters (originally delivered in the form of sermons) are perhaps the best popular specimens of this mode of address. Claude gives a beautiful specimen of this preaching in his Sermon on Phil. ii. 12. See also Mr. Simeon's Sermon on the Gospel Message, appended to his edition of Claude—the sermons of Walker of Edinburgh (as, for instance, on 2 Cor. vi. 1,) and Vitringa's sermon on the history of Jabez, (1 Chron. iv. 10.) in his *Methodus Homiletica*.

² Heb. i. ii.

³ Ib. iii. 1—6.

⁴ Ib. iii. 7—19. iv. 1—11.

⁵ Ib. iv. 12—16. v—vii.

love, and general devotedness.¹ The concluding sketch of the Old Testament history, furnishes a clear illustration of the identity of Christian principle under both dispensations :² while the various practical inferences deduced from it are well calculated to instruct and enliven the sincere Christian under all his trials and perplexities.³

This method of current application is however the most difficult form of address. The skilful introduction of suitable topics, and the decent dismissal of them severally, before they become worn out—peculiar choice of thoughts and expressions—affectionate impressiveness and animation of manner, are indispensable to give to this mode of address its full effect. Hortatory subjects are on the whole best adapted, and doctrinal subjects the least fitting, for this way of preaching. Nor would it be necessary in the adoption of it to analyze every minute particle of the text ; but far preferable, though with due regard to textual exposition, to select the most impressive and awakening topics, forming the prominent features of the passage under consideration. Perhaps also, as a general rule, this is the mode, that can be least of all adopted as a system. Few men are capable of sustaining it equably, and with a suitable adaptation to the ever-varying occasions, and to the characters and circumstances of their hearers. It requires an elevated tone of excitement under judicious control, so as to be searching, appropriate, and animated throughout. Much depends, therefore, upon the preacher's state of mind. To enter in an unequal frame upon an exercise, that demands his full powers of interest and vigour, would probably end in personal discomfort to himself, and in total failure of effect.

¹ Heb. viii.—x.

² Ib. xi.

³ Ib. xii., xiii.

Closeness, faithfulness, discrimination, and love, will be the characteristics of this applicatory system ; the matter of which will be gathered from an accurate acquaintance with the individual cases of our hearers, and from a full display of the infinite riches of grace and glory, and of the tremendously awful consequences of “neglecting so great salvation.”

SECTION V.

DISCRIMINATING PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

“THE discerning of spirits”¹—including an accurate knowledge of the principles of human character and action—is a spiritual gift yet continued to the Church, and most important for the wise and edifying discharge of our sacred office. Whatever natural acuteness may belong to it, ye — as a *spiritual qualification*—it is a part of that heavenly wisdom, of which the Christian Minister needs a double portion, and which is “given liberally unto him”² that asketh.

The losing sight of the wide distinction between a credible profession and a spiritual conversion of heart, has occasioned the general and most dangerous mode of addressing all persons under the Christian character, upon the ground of their acknowledgment of a national creed, or external regulations. It is therefore most important distinctly to trace the line of demarcation *between the church and the world*.³ It cannot be too strongly laid down in our Ministry, that the Word

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 10.² James i. 5.³ See this subject drawn out with equal power and accuracy in Dr. Chalmers’s Sermons at the Tron Church, pp. 361, 362. Boldness in declaring this Scriptural line of separation is encouraged with a special word of promise, Jer. xv. 19.

of God recognizes but two classes among men—those that “are of God, and the whole world that lieth in wickedness.”¹ They are described by *their state before God*, as converted or unconverted—by *their knowledge or ignorance of the Gospel*, as spiritual or natural men—by *their special regard to Christ*, as believers or unbelievers—by *their interest in the Spirit of God*, “being in the Spirit, or having not the Spirit of Christ”—by *their habits of life*, “walking after, and minding, the things of the Spirit or the things of the flesh”—by their respective *rules of conduct*, the Word of God, or “the course of this world,”—by *the Masters whom they respectively obey*, the servants of God or the servants of Satan—by *the road, in which they travel*, the narrow way or the broad road—by *the ends, to which their roads are carrying them*—life or death—heaven or hell. The line of demarcation, therefore, between these two classes, with the numerous modifications belonging to each, is like that “great gulf,”² which separates the two divisions of the eternal state. There can be no more amalgamation between these principles, than between light and darkness—between Christ and Belial. Nor is there any greater delusion for the consciences of the unconverted, or greater perplexity to the sincere but unintelligent Christian, than a loose and indiscriminate application of the Gospel to both descriptions in one general mass.³ It is not enough that our discourses

¹ John v. 19.

² Luke xvi. 26.

³ Most assuredly (remarks Mr. Scott) ‘this *undistinguishing* way of preaching is “casting that which is holy unto the dogs;” and, I am deeply convinced, is one of the worst mistakes that a preacher can fall into; tending most directly to stupify the consciences and harden the hearts of the ungodly, and to “strengthen their hands, that they should not return from their evil way;” and, in proportion, discouraging the heart of the humble, broken, contrite believer.’ Letters and Papers, p. 441.’

present accurate and sufficient materials for discrimination. The clearness and frequency of our statements are neutralized, without applying that test to individual consciences. Thus must we lay down with all possible plainness and accuracy, and with direct application, the distinguishing marks of the converted and the unconverted, that each side may be compelled, however reluctantly, to ascertain, on which side of the broad line he actually stands. Misconception, indistinctness, or indecision, will give serious advantage to the self-deceiving of the heart on the one side, and to the scrupulosity of unbelief on the other—errors, both of which seriously affect the spiritual condition of our people, and from which the clear light of Scripture is alone sufficient to guard them.

Nor is it less important to *separate between the professing and the true Church*. No part of the Christian character is without its counterfeit. How easily are the delusions of fancy or feeling mistaken for the impressions of grace! The genuineness of the work of God must be estimated, not by the extent, but by the influence, of Christian knowledge—not by a fluency of gifts, but by their exercise in simplicity, humility, and self-denial—not by any excitement of feeling, but by its connexion with holiness and love. Brainerd (than whom no man had a clearer insight into counterfeit religion) excellently remarked—‘that much more of true religion consists in deep humility, brokenness of heart, and an abasing sense of want of grace and holiness, than most, who are called Christians, imagine.’—‘He spoke’ (as his biographer informs us) ‘with much detestation of that pretended experience of religion, which had nothing of the nature of sanctification in it, that did not tend to strictness,

tenderness, and diligence in religion, to meekness and benevolence towards mankind—and that was not manifested by modesty of conduct and conversation.' He emphatically enforced the importance of this discrimination upon a probationer for the Ministry—'Labour (said he) *to distinguish clearly* upon experiences and affections in religion, that you may make a difference between the gold and the shining dross. I say, labour here, if ever *you would be an useful Minister of Christ.*'¹ This peculiar difficulty suggests the importance of giving clear and specific evidences of the Christian character—marking those only that are essential to its existence and completeness—and presenting them in terms of unambiguous meaning and individual application. The study of the frame and moving principles of the human mind is also of great moment, as throwing light upon many perplexing cases; and enabling us to mark the influence of bodily passions, constitutional temperament, or disordered imagination, in obscuring or counterfeiting genuine piety.

But we must also regard *the different individualities of profession within the church*. If we would give discriminating instruction to the several cases, we must ascertain as clearly as possible what stage of the Christian life is reached; what is the degree of strength or weakness, of faintness or overcoming in the spiritual conflict; of advancement or retrogression in evangelical holiness; of growing distinctness or obscurity in the apprehensions of the truth; of decided separation from the world, or remaining conformity to it; of increasing

¹ See his Diary, and Letter ix. appended to his Life. It is scarcely necessary to refer to Edwards's celebrated work on the affections—as the closest and most searching touchstone of Christian sincerity, and the most accurate detector of the diversified forms of false profession and delusive experience.

glow or decline of the love of Christ in the soul. The Minister (as Bishop Hall remarks) ‘ must discern between his sheep and wolves ; in his sheep, between the sound and the unsound ; in the unsound, between the weak and the tainted ; in the tainted, between the nature, qualities, and degrees of the disease and infection ; and to all these he must know to administer a word in season. He hath antidotes for all temptations, counsels for all doubts, evictions for all errors, for all languishings. No occasion, from any altered state of the soul, may find him unfurnished.’¹ ‘ The epidemic malady of our nature’ (as has been admirably observed by a writer lately referred to) ‘ assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment ; nor will the same prescription suit all cases. A different set of truths, a different mode of address, is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, from what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart ; nor is it easy to say, which we should most guard against, the infusion of a false peace, or the inflaming of the wounds which we ought to heal.’²

The Apostolic Ministry justly discriminates between every subdivision of the two grand classes—between every feature of sinner or saint ; and exhibits the Gospel—not in the general—but in that detailed adaptation to every specific case, which lays the heart open to the attentive self-observer.³ And doubtless a defect

¹ Bishop Hall’s Epistles, Decad. iv. Epist. 5. Works, vii. 210.

² Hall’s Sermon, ut supra, p. 22.

³ St. Paul’s sketch of the different features of the converted and unconverted, together with his distinct treatment of babes and adults ; and St. John’s distribution of believers into the several

of this discrimination must greatly impede the success of our Ministry. For it is not the general power of the medical art, but the suiting of the remedy to the disease, that operates with healing, though perhaps painful, efficacy. What should we think of a practitioner, who had one sovereign remedy for every kind of complaint, without regard to the patient's age, constitution, or habit? And yet this promiscuous application would be more safe in medical science than in experimental divinity; as the spiritual constitution is more susceptible of injury than the material system. Close and distinct consideration, therefore, of the several cases and characteristic features of our people, is one of the component parts of an effective Ministration.¹

classes of "little children, young men, and fathers,"—may be referred to as illustrative of this point. Rom. viii. 1—13. 1 Cor. iii. 1. Heb. v. 12—14. with 1 John ii. 12, 13.

¹ Zepper speaks so admirably upon the subject of this Section, that, as his work is but in few hands, we cannot forbear a quotation:—'Cujus operis difficultatem tam multiplex et varia auditorum, quibus verbi divini mysteria dispensanda sunt, diversitas sexuum, ætatum, ingeniorum, opinionum, profectuum, conditionis, institutionis, morborum et affectionum animi discrimen, imó contrarietas non parum auget: dum alii hypocritæ sunt; alii afflicti peccatores: alii flagitiosi; alii pié viventes: alii desperabundi; alii cum infirmitate et conscientia variis tentationibus variè luctantes; alii pabulo, quod pascua tantúm, et fontes Israëlís sapiat, contenti; alii delicati et nauseabundi, quorum palato nihil feré sapit, quantumvis orthodoxum, nisi carnem quoque et mundum resipiat. Quos animorum morbos, et diversam auditorum rationem, ut nosse difficile est: ita convenientia omnibus et singulis remedia, ex verbi divini pharmacopolio depromere, eaque feliciter etiam applicare, quanti, quamque immensi laboris et sudoris, quanti ingenii, quantæ spiritualis prudentiæ res est—Unde etiam Christus Ecclesiæ suæ pastorem servo comparat prudenti et fideli, super famulitium Domini constituto, ut illis alimentum det, et quidem in tempore, hoc est, non promiscué, obiter aut perfunctorie, sed pro ratione temporum, adeoque et locorum et ingeniorum, quibuscum negotium illi est. Matt. xxiv. 45.' Preface, pp. 5, 6.

SECTION VI.**DECIDED PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.**

THE power even of a Scriptural exhibition of truth, is often materially weakened by an indecisive mode of statement. The doctrines of the Gospel appear to be allowed and set forth ; but in so feeble and hesitating a tone, as evinces either a careless investigation into their character, a doubtful opinion of their truth, or an indistinct apprehension of their value and efficacy. Such a representation awakens but little interest, and produces no effect. Our people feel little obligation to receive what, from the spiritless mode of presentment, appears to be of minor importance—at least not worthy of inconvenient consideration or expensive sacrifices. In many serious statements of the doctrine of human corruption, of the cardinal doctrine of justification, of the work and influence of the Spirit, it would be difficult to detect any positive contrariety to Scripture ; while yet there is an evident deterioration from the “ full assurance,” with which our Reformers have laid them down, as constituting the foundation of the faith and practice of the Gospel, and as indispensable to the character, hope, and establishment of the consistent Christian. This indecisive tone may have partially arisen from a danger, against which we shall do well to guard—reading too much of the writings of men, and too little of the sacred word. It is only by searching the Scriptures, and thus knowing the solid ground on which we stand, that we can make those strong and constant appeals “ to the law and to the testimony,” which characterize a decided view of the Gospel, and enable us to deliver them in a clear and

decided manner; thus "magnifying our office," by the undoubted and warranted confidence, that our message is "not the word of man, but in truth the word of God." On points connected with the Divine purposes (on which difference of sentiment has always existed) the exercise of Christian moderation and forbearance is most suitable. But on the grand fundamentals of the Gospel, an authoritative decision of statement becomes us—not allowing or supposing a doubt to belong to our message, any more than to our own existence. In this mode the Apostles and their fellow-labourers preached the Gospel. They had received it from the mouth of God; they were personally acquainted with the credentials of its Divine authority; they delivered it as *a testimony*, bringing with it its own evidence; and thus, by manifestation of the truth, they commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."¹ How strenuously did they defend themselves from the charge of indecision, even in ordinary matters! The Apostle considered it as so grave an accusation, and likely to prove so injurious to his Ministry, that he felt himself justified in calling his God to witness, that in no respect had his word been fickle among them, but that his testimony of his Saviour had been consistent, decided, and unwavering.²

Such was the Apostle's decided conviction of the truth of his own testimony, that he hesitates not to curse himself, or even an angel from heaven, upon the supposition that he could "preach any other Gospel, than that which he had preached unto them."³ To those whom he detected in undermining it, he "*would*

¹ Comp. Luke, i. 3. 1 John i. 1—3. 2 Peter i. 16. with 2 Cor. iv. 2.

² 2 Cor. i. 17—20.

³ Gal. i. 8, 9.

give place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with "the church. Nay, when he met with an opponent to the liberty of the Gospel in the person of an Apostle—"he withstood him to the face," even before the whole Church, "because he was to be blamed,"¹ Yet this was the same Apostle, who in matters of lesser moment was ever ready to "become all things to all men, if that by any means he might save some;"² who would give up the use of meat to the end of his life, rather than put a stumbling-block in the way of a weak brother;³ and who would circumcise Timothy in condescension to the infirmities and prejudices of his brethren, to gain a more conciliating access to their hearts.⁴ This was he, who, in his own spirit, was "gentle among his people as a nursing mother cherisheth her children;" who yet could not endure among them any perversion of doctrine, or laxity of practice, without the severest rebukes and fearful threatenings.⁵ So important is it, that the character of decision should be—not our own spirit—"lording over the Lord's heritage," or "having dominion over their faith,"⁶ (a spiritual exercise of the power of the princes of this world⁷) but "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," who, though the servant of all—yet as the messenger of God, "spake as one having authority." "We speak," (said he on one occasion,) "*that which we know, and testify that we have seen.*"⁸ "We have the same spirit of faith," (said his chosen Apostle) "according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; *we also believe, and therefore speak.*"⁹

¹ Gal. ii. 5, 11, 12. ² 1 Cor. ix. 22. ³ 1 Cor. viii. 13.

⁴ Acts xvi. 3. ⁵ 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. with Gal. v. 2. 1 Cor. iii. 17.

⁶ 1 Peter v. 3. 2 Cor. i. 24. ⁷ Matt. xx. 25.

⁸ John iii. 11. ⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 13.

CHAPTER V.

THE MODE OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

WHAT diversity do we observe in the mode, in which the doctrines of the Gospel are exhibited by our most approved Ministers! Their style, their compositions, their mechanical systems of instruction, have each an individual character; and something probably may be learned from all. The tone of mind, our habits, preparatory training, schemes of study, conversance with certain schools and standards of preaching—all combine to mould the character of our Ministrations. Some will adopt one mode, some another; nor can any decision be absolutely pronounced upon the superior excellency of one of them to the rest under all circumstances. The Divine blessing evidently depends not on the discovery and practice of the best mode—but upon the simplicity in which we seek for direction, and the conscientious diligence with which we improve the light afforded to us. Yet there are some specialities worthy our consideration, on which we shall venture to offer a few suggestions.

SECTION I.

TOPICAL AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

THE mode of communicating our message is either *topical*, preaching from texts and small portions of Scripture detached from their context—or *expository*, taking large and connected portions of sacred writ, as the ground-work of our public discourses. It is far

better to combine the advantages of both, than to set either plan in opposition to the other, or to adopt either exclusively.

The *topical* scheme is supported by the example of our Lord, on his entrance upon his public Ministry. He read his text, interpreted it, laid down the doctrine of it, began to apply it for reproof, and to illustrate it by Scripture example; and thus would have proceeded to the end, had not the madness of the people, in the midst of their wonder, interrupted his course.¹ The difficulty of this scheme is two-fold. 1st. The discerning of the mind of the Spirit in the text, as connected with the context, so as to reduce it to a single and definite proposition; and then—2ndly. to found on it such a statement of Christian truth, as naturally arises out of it, and is in most perfect accordance with it. *This* will enable us to bring forth every part of the Christian system in its place and season, and will prevent a constant repetition of the same general statement of Divine truth; which, however interesting in itself, loses much of its interest by a constant and exclusive recurrence to it. Such is the fulness of the Gospel, that there is not any part of God's word, or any proposition, which does not admit of rich and appropriate elucidation from it. A mind acquainted with the depth of this heavenly mine, will find in every portion of Holy Writ somewhat of "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" and with such resources, a failure of bringing forth the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel from the textual system will prove, not the exhausted state of the treasure, but the want of spiritual and accurate observation of its hidden store.

¹ Luke iv. 16—30.

The *expository* scheme, though sometimes a less popular and impassioned exercise, yet, by a judicious mixture with the topical system, forms a most important vehicle of Christian instruction. Comprehensive, and connected views of Divine truth are thus set forth, equally conducive to Christian intelligence, privilege, and steadfastness. The habit is avoided of building upon a text what is not authorized by the context; and our people read the Scriptures with more interest, because with more understanding, and with less danger of being misled by disjointed views of truth. They look for the confirmation of Christian doctrine, more from the general strain of the sacred argument, than from the partial citation of insulated texts.

Many subjects are also brought forward, which otherwise might probably have been omitted.¹ Matters of application to particular sins or errors occur in their ordinary course, without just imputation of personality; and short occasional hints, thus naturally arising from our subjects, fall with a weight of conviction, for which our hearers are often wholly unprepared. There is no time to take the alarm, and to fortify the mind against conviction; as they might do, when the main subject is directly levelled against their particular errors or occasions of reproof. The whole extent of the Scripture field is also thus laid open in the length and breadth thereof. Occasions are offered of setting forth every doctrine, and enforcing every practical obligation. Our views and application of truth being forced into an extended range, are much preserved from wearisome sameness and repetitions. The mind of God is discovered more accu-

¹ Perhaps instruction connected with divorce would not have occurred in a village Ministry, except in a regular course of Exposition (Mark x. 2—12.) In this way the Writer somewhat reluctantly introduced it, but with unexpected effect.

rately in the precise statements, and proportions of truth, and the particular connexion in which it stands. Here ‘God speaks much, and man little.’¹ Without being entangled in the trammels of system, our views would be both enlarged and controuled by tracing the scope, argument, and relative position of truth in its several compartments—the course of family worship would materially assist the moulding of the mind into this scheme. Large portions of Scripture drawn out within the limit of time usually allotted to this interesting service, would gradually train us to the successful habit of connecting the main points, rather than of analyzing the minute particles, of our subjects.

This scheme formed a prominent part of primitive instruction.² Augustine and Chrysostom dealt largely in it. The Homilies of the latter father are justly considered as among the best models for expository preaching, and the most valuable relics of ecclesiastical antiquity. The course of exposition however should not be too long; the subjects should be judiciously selected with a special regard to our own resources, and to the circumstances of our people; care should be taken to mingle compassion with instruction, to keep the heart and consciences in view in our endeavour to inform the understanding; and an interchange of the two systems should be adopted for greater variety and effect.

¹ Chrysostom.

² See Cave's Primitive Christianity, ch. ix.

SECTION II.

EXTEMPORE AND WRITTEN SERMONS.

THE Writer does not attempt to settle this mooted point for his brethren. His own practice of extempore preaching is taken up after much consideration; as being, in his own case at least, the more excellent way; yet it is combined with the most ready concession to those, who are 'fully persuaded in their own mind' of the superior advantages of a different system. None however but enthusiasts, generally speaking, are concerned with *extempore preaching*, strictly so called. Unpremeditated speech was promised to the Apostles with a specific reference to their peculiar difficulties which admitted of no human resources of help.¹ And though their public Ministry was probably of this kind, yet no precedent can be drawn from miraculous influence, overcoming natural disadvantages with a Divine power, superinduced for an extraordinary work.

The term is therefore retained in its popular use—referring to *unwritten* sermons, digested and arranged by preparatory meditation, the language and the filling up of the outlines only being left to the occasion of the moment.

As a general rule—we must feel ourselves in order to excite others;² and perhaps the passage from heart

¹ Luke xxi. 14, 15. Matt. x. 19, 20. The martyrs inherited a full and undoubted interest in this promise. But it never was intended to promise Divine inspiration in its ordinary sense without premeditation; or to imply, that preparatory study was either unnecessary, or a bar to the reception of needful assistance. The exhortation to Timothy (1. iv. 13. referred to Part I. ch. vii. Sect. i.) evidently supposes that the study of our subjects is not unnecessary.

² ——— Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi.

HORACE.

as Jerome observed of his friend Nepotian—‘ that by daily reading and meditation in the sacred volume he had made his soul *a library of Christ.*’ This is *instar omnium*. Nothing at least will compensate for the want of it ; while it will under some circumstances supply the place of secondary qualifications.

Much help may also be derived from conversational habits with our people. What the moment suggests for individual use, would more or less apply collectively ; and practice with frequent interchange of communication would gradually inspire confidence.

‘ Smaller excursions ’¹ in Cottage readings, would be another step towards attainment. Familiar exposition of Scripture in our domestic worship is also one of the best preparations. A young Minister studying a passage morning and evening, consulting commentators, and expounding extempore, can hardly fail of enriching his mind, and of acquiring a Scriptural style of simplicity, and confidence in the delivery of his subjects.

This exercise however should be combined with thoughtful and well-digested habits of composition. Dr. Doddridge, without recommending the practice of written sermons, gives detailed rules for most elaborate pulpit composition.² And thus the fluency of the pulpit is the result of the diligent employment in the study, which has often been committed to the press with very slight variations from the public delivery. The advantage therefore, which Bishop Burnet conceived to belong to written sermons, may be claimed for this system perhaps with preponderating evidence. It often combines ‘ heat and force in delivery ’ with ‘ strength and

¹ Burnet's Past. Care.

² See his Preaching Lectures.

solidity of matter ;' ¹ and volumes of sermons are gathered from thence, that in all essential points will rank with the most elaborate compositions of a more mechanical system.

Yet the advantages of written composition must not be overlooked. Wearisome repetition—defective modes of expression—a confused arrangement of the flowing thoughts of the moment—(evils more or less incidental to the opposite scheme) are thus avoided ; and a large portion of solid matter is embodied in lucid order and correct style. So that (at the early stages at least) the Roman orator may justly recommend 'much writing as the best preparation to good speaking.' ² Indeed it can scarcely be conceived, how little apprehension the tyro in theology has of his own immature attainments, until he endeavours to express his ideas on paper. At every step he finds unlooked-for difficulties, and constant need of expansion, or of correction. He has to "lay again the foundation" of what he fancied himself to have attained, not having prepared his way as he advanced, or having thoroughly mastered any part of his subject. The quantum of composition will however vary according to the natural constitution and acquired habits of the mind. But in few cases can a certain proportion be omitted with advantage. Few men unite *sound judgment* with a lively imagination, and therefore ordinary sermons, without any pains of composition, would be a mass of inanimate matter,

¹ Burnet's History of the Reformation, Book I. year 1542.

² Caput autem est, quod (ut veré dicam) minime facimus (est enim magni laboris, quem plerique fugimus) quàm plurimum scribere. Cic. de Orat. At the same time he observes, that should the speaker only avail himself in part of the habit of writing, the remainder of his address will partake more or less of the style of correct composition.

deficient in apt illustration and pointed application. The preacher of *an excursive* fancy needs the use of his pen to restrain himself within the limits of an accurate and connected plan; and without it the digressive and irrelevant matter would probably form the most considerable part of his discourses. The *fluent preacher* with little reading, judgment, or imagination, without the use of this resource to put matter into his shadowy mechanism, will be wordy, declamatory, unsubstantial, and uninteresting. Indeed the gift of fluency, without a habit of application or a well-furnished mind, would be rather a misfortune than a desirable qualification. It would be attended with the personal danger of neglecting intellectual improvement, and with the Ministerial temptation of digressing from our proper subject at times of embarrassment, to irrelevant points more agreeable to our own inclination. And thus some have been spoilt from the want of the book, as well as others fettered by the use of it.

Written sermons were indeed unknown in the early Primitive Church. The nature of their public services did not admit of the practice. Their sermons were little else than expositions of the Scriptures read in the congregation, commonly of the lesson last read, as being most fresh in the memory of the people. Two or three sermons were sometimes delivered successively in the same assembly—‘after the reading of the Gospel, the Presbyters exhorting the people one by one, not all at once; and after all the Bishop, as it is fitting for the Master to do.’¹ Augustine’s and Chrysostom’s frequency of preaching, connected with incessant Ministerial activity, rendered it morally impossible,

¹ Cave’s Primitive Christianity.

that they could have *fully written*, and consequently read, their sermons. And though Burnet states, that the practice of reading sermons was in usage at the time of the Reformation (and probably not unknown even among the Christian fathers,¹) yet extemporaneous preaching was used by some of the most eminent of our English Reformers. No other judgment can be formed of Latimer's honest "plainness of speech;" and not a few memorials of several of his cotemporaries bear to the same point.²

Archbishop Secker, after discussing the question of written and extempore sermons, recommends written sketches, combined with extempore delivery, as 'a middle way used by some of our predecessors;' ³ and adds—'perhaps duly managed, this would be the best.'⁴ The scheme, argument, and application of the discourse are given, without needless anxiety to preserve the precise letter of the composition, which indeed is adopted, when naturally occurring to the mind—when otherwise, the matter is clothed in the garb, which the present moment supplies. This plan seems to combine the advantages of the two schemes—restraining within bounds of chastised feeling and well-digested arrangement, without the shackles of a written

¹ Some hints may be found in the writings of Augustine and Gregory, referring to the custom of their sermons being written and read to the people, when they were prevented from preaching in person: which shows that the custom of reading, though not practised by them, was not wholly unknown.

² See some references in Budd on Infant Baptism, pp. 474, 475.

³ Such as Bishop Bull. See his Life by Nelson, p. 59. Bishop Spratt, Clerg. Instructor, p. 251. Some most admirable rules for the attainment of this exercise are given by Bishop Burnet, in his Pastoral Care, chap. ix. and by Fenelon in his Dialogues. Erasmus traces the practice to the Fathers—'Tutum est capita sermonis in charta notata habere ad manum, quod in Psalmos aliquot fecisse videtur Augustinus; et haud scio, an in omnes, quanquam vir memoria ad prodigium usque felici.'

⁴ Charges, p. 287—291.

composition. The memory is exercised without painful anxiety, while the mind is left free to the excitement of the feeling of the moment, in dependence upon Divine assistance. ‘A man, however, cannot expect a good habit of preaching thus, without much study and experience. Young beginners should use themselves to a more exact and elaborate way. When a good style and expression is first learned by perusing, it will afterwards be more easily retained in discoursing.’¹ No lack either of matter or expression needs generally be apprehended in a well-digested and arranged subject.² “Of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak;” ‘nor will the preacher (as has been observed) ‘be able to repeat a tenth part of the truths, which God has communicated to him, while meditating upon his text.’³ Increasing interest, aided by practice, will also gradually remove difficulties; and that ‘vehement simplicity,’ which Cecil justly defined to be ‘true eloquence,’⁴ will characterize our preaching, even amidst much humbling and most profitable experience of Ministerial weakness. If parliamentary or forensic speakers have attained an uninterrupted fluency of expression, even while “leaning to their own understanding;” much more, if the Lord means to employ this habit in his service,

¹ Wilkins’ Eccles. p. 203.

² ——— Cui lecta potenter erit res,
Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo—
Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequuntur.

Hor. de Arte Poet.

‘Whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others—when *such a man would speak*, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.’ Milton.

³ Act of Synod of Berne, ch. xl. quoted in Fletcher’s Portrait of St. Paul.

⁴ Cecil’s Remains.

may we assure ourselves of a competent measure of spiritual ability, in the use of the appointed means, and in dependence on his promised aid. Nor are we ever better fitted for our work, than while cherishing a deep-toned recollection—"Without me ye can do nothing."¹

After all, however, it appears to the Writer, that far too great importance is attached to this mode by many excellent ministers. Though much consideration has determined his own practice of it, he is fully persuaded, that such is the diversity of gifts among preachers of equal eminence, that the best mode cannot be improved in all cases with equal advantage. Some have greater readiness of expression by their pen. With others, most freedom is experienced in the excitement of their feelings, under an immediate sense of their awful responsibility. It will readily be granted, that a judicious and animated system of reading (no very infrequent case among the clergy, whose hearts are more deeply engaged in the work of the Ministry) is more edifying than an ill-conducted and unfurnished habit of ex-

¹ Professor Campbell seems scarcely to recognize this practice in the Kirk. In discussing the several advantages and disadvantages of *reading and repeating our discourses*, he justly complained of the burden of the latter usage, as interfering with important pastoral engagements. Campbell on Pulp. Eloquence, Lect. iv. On Past. Char. Lect. ix. Comp. Smith's Lectures on the Pastoral Office, Lect. xx. Some just remarks on the disadvantages of memoriter sermons may be found in Fenelon's Dialogues (Dial. ii.) and Burnet's Pastoral Care, ch. ix. Besides, in the act of delivery, it is likely to deaden the affections by the anxious process of reciting, to divert the attention from the sentiment to the word, and to produce a hurried, monotonous, or inharmonious tone of address. Indeed upon the whole, it is no more than a school-boy's exercise of 'most unreasonable laboriousness,' which Bishop Burnet conceives it possible few to maintain, and with which the heart has as little necessary concern, as it is often supposed to have with the pages of the book. Compare Secker's Charges, p. 291.

tempore speaking¹—not to speak of the re-excited, remembered, and digested materials of experience, which are brought forward on this system with greater advantage than on the extemporary scheme.² The fruitful Ministrations of Mr. Milner of Hull, and Mr. Walker of Truro, and the early years of Mr. Robinson, were raised upon the scheme of written compositions; and some of the most successful Ministerial labours within the Writer's sphere of observation have been characterized by the same system. And may it not be asked on the ground of ecclesiastical consistency—Why should the book be more objectionable in the pulpit than in the desk? Why is it not possible spiritually to preach, as well as to pray, with a form? Extempore preaching is the *mode* not the *matter*—the shell—the vehicle, not the essential substance. Nor was it the *mode* that gave effect to the *matter* in Apostolic practice! A sermon written or unwritten may be

¹ The following lines have much good sense in them :

'Should you, my friend, the important question ask—
With or without my papers shall I preach?
My answer hear and weigh. Your sermons write
From end to end; and every thought invest
With full expression, such as best may suit
Its nature and its use; and then pronounce
As much as your remembrance can retain.
Rather read every sentence word for word,
Than wander, in a desultory strain—
A chaos, dark, irregular, and wild—
Where the same thought and language oft revolves,
And re-revolves to tire sagacious minds;
However loud the momentary praise
Of ignorance, and empty fervors charm'd.
But never to your notes be so enslaved,
As to repress some instantaneous thought,
That may, like lightning, dart upon the soul,
And blaze in strength, and majesty Divine.'

Gibbons' Christian Minister.

² We would suggest however the importance of reading over a written sermon repeatedly before the delivery; in which case it will have much of the ease and force of an extemporaneous discourse.

alike the fruit of prayer, and the exercise of faith ; and according to the spirit of the composition, and the principles in action, not according to the mode of its delivery, is it accepted and honoured. In either case there is the same need of faith, and the same difficulty in its exercise. In either case is the same danger of formality ; nor is it easier to say whether the dependence upon the book or upon the gift is more natural or delusive.

But it is hard to maintain an elevated view of the advantages of one system, without an undue depreciation of the other. Many excellent divines trace the usage of reading sermons, or the preaching of written sermons, to unbelief, an undue regard to self, the fear of man,¹ or to “ the spirit of the world.”² But who, from the days of St. Paul, was less under the influence of these unevangelical principles than Luther ? Yet he tells us ‘ that (occasionally, not in his ordinary custom) he preached out of the book, though not of necessity, as if he could not do otherwise, *yet for example’s sake to others.*’³ Mr. Milner’s written compositions, in the faithfulness of statement, unction of style, and closeness of application, are exceeded—we might almost say equalled—by no Ministry conducted on the opposite system. Perhaps they could not be more justly characterized, than by Mr. Budd’s description of the offensiveness of *extemporaneous preaching*.⁴

A writer in the *Christian Observer*⁵ (who has thrown out many valuable hints upon the general subject) charges this practice upon idleness. Mr. Baxter,

¹ See Newton’s Letters to Mr. Barlass.

² Budd on Infant Baptism, pp. 493—496.

³ See Edward’s Preacher, i. 220.

⁴ Budd on Infant Baptism, p. 497.

⁵ See *Christian Observer*, Oct. 1828.

however, in noticing the Quaker's objection—'You read your sermons out of a paper, therefore you have not the Spirit'—replies—'It is not want of your abilities, that makes Ministers use notes; but it is a regard to the work, and good of the hearers.' *I use notes as much as any man, when I take pains; and as little as any man, when I am lazy, or busy, or have not time to prepare. It is easier for us to preach three sermons without notes, than one with them.*'¹ The principle of Baxter's reply—as rebutting the objections of '*reading sermons out of a paper*'—bears upon this point. This accusation was made the ground of the celebrated mandate of King Charles.² But the theological authority of this curious document, issuing from King Charles's court, is reduced to a minimum; and its universal observance at the time when religion was at the lowest ebb among the clergy, would have been a woful calamity to the nation. For how much less calculated for instruction would have been extemporary addresses from unpractised and unspiritual men, than written compositions, which might have embodied some useful substance from extrinsical resources! Besides, may not this charge be applied in some instances to the extemporary system? May not indolence render the mind (with a tolerable fluency of utterance) unwilling to burden itself with the labour of thinking out important matters? Bishop Stillingfleet complained in his day—'There is got an

¹ Church History, 4to. 1680, p. 471. Bishop Hall tells us of his own practice—'When I preached three times in a week, yet never durst I climb into the pulpit to preach any sermon, whereof I had not before, in my poor and plain fashion, penned every word in the same order wherein I hoped to deliver it; although in the expression I listed not to be a slave to syllables.' Account of himself, p. 34.

² Appendix to Dr. Buchanan's Sermon on Eras of Light, and Richmond's Life, p. 157.

ill habit of speaking extempore, and a loose and careless way of talking in the pulpit; which is easy to the preacher, and plausible to less judicious people.’¹ In both cases it would be admitted to be the abuse; but both systems are evidently liable to abuse. The same writer somewhat boldly states, that a man incapable of preaching extemporaneously, is ‘not fit for the Ministry—being not “apt to teach.”’² But would not this supposition have disqualified Moses from his Divine commission, which, though not identical with the work of preaching, yet comprised a considerable proportion of instruction, and would have been much commended by fluency of utterance? Yet if God had deemed it indispensable for His work, He could as easily have supplied the deficiency, instead of compensating for it by extrinsic help.³ When therefore the heart is right, and the indications of the will of God clear, why may not the same deficiency be similarly provided for by another mode of administration?

The opponents never appear to advert to the very frequent reason for the adoption of written sermons—*concession to the temper and prejudices of our people*. It seems incurring a fearful responsibility, should any withdraw from our Ministry on account of offence taken upon this ground. “The offence of the cross” respects the matter, and not the mode, of our Ministrations; and this, be it remembered, is the only offence that is unconnected with personal responsibility. The principle of “becoming all things to all men,”⁴ surely extends to every particular of the *mode of address*, though not to one particle of the fundamental matter;⁵

¹ Duties and Rights of the Parochial Clergy, p. 30.

² Christian Observer, Oct. 1828.

³ Exod. iv. 10—16.

⁴ 1 Cor. ix. 22.

⁵ See Gal. ii. 5.

SECTION I.

BOLDNESS—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

OUR Lord's pungent addresses to the Scribes and Pharisees¹ exhibit the boldness of Christian Ministrations. The same spirit in the Apostles was unaccountable upon human calculations,² and confounded their judges to their face.³ Such was the spirit of Paul before Felix⁴—a prisoner on his trial for life—"no man standing by him"—hated even to death by the influential body of his countrymen; yet, mean and, in peril as he was, did he look his Judge in the face, with the power of life and death in his hands; and, remembering only the dignity of his office, deliver to this noble sinner and his guilty partner the most personal and offensive truths. How did this splendid example of Ministerial boldness "magnify his office!" For what can be more degrading to our Divine commission, than that we should fear the face of men? What unmindfulness does it argue of our Master's presence and authority, and of our high responsibilities, as "set for the defence of the gospel!"⁵ The independence, that disregards alike the praise and the censure of man, is indispensable for the integrity of the Christian Ministry.

Luther would have been tolerated on many truths of general application; but his bold statements of

¹ See Matt. xxiii.

² Acts ii. 13.

³ Acts iv. 13. See the power that rested upon this spirit; 29—33. xiv. 3. St. Paul's deep sense of its importance. Eph. vi. 19, 20. Col. iv. 3, 4—the same spirit characterizing the Jewish prophets, 1 Kings xxi. 20. xxii. 14—25. 2 Chron. xvi. 7. xxiv. 20. Isaiah lviii. 1. lxv. 1. with Rom. x. 20. Amos vii. 12, 14. Micah iii. 8. Matt. iii. 7.

⁴ Acts xxiv. 25.

⁵ Phil. i. 17.

justification could not be endured. How different from Erasmus, who, though a lay-man, delivered his doctrines *ex cathedra*, yet with an unworthy carefulness to avoid inconvenient offence! But the question is not, how our people may be pleased, but how they may be warned, instructed, and saved. And to keep offensive doctrines out of view, or to apologize for the occasional mention of them, or to be over cautious respecting the rudeness of disquieting the conscience with unwelcome truth; to compromise with the world; to connive at fashionable sins; or to be silent, where the cause of God demands an open confession—this is not the spirit which honours our Master, and which he “delighteth to honour.”¹

The *reproof of sin* is an important part of Ministerial boldness. Even the courtesies of life never restrained our Lord from this office. The Pharisees’ dinners were often made the seasons of rebuke, and never used as an excuse for declining it.² Scriptural rules and exhortations are given respecting it in the Ministerial Epistles—that it should be, when occasion required, *public*,³ as a warning to others—*sharp*,⁴ as a means of conviction to the offender—with *authority*,⁵ in our Master’s name—with *love*,⁶ in the hope of ultimate restoration. It should, however, be aimed at the sin rather than at the sinner himself. There was no need for the Apostle to make any personal allusion to Felix. Conscience told the trembling criminal—“Thou art the man.”⁷

This Ministerial boldness is fenced on either side by

¹ See some searching views on this subject, in a sermon entitled *The Gospel Message*, by Rev. Dr. Dealtry, pp. 24—26.

² Luke vii. 36—46. xi. 37—54.

³ 1 Tim. v. 20.

⁴ Titus i. 13.

⁵ Titus ii. 15.

⁶ 1 Tim. v. 1. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

⁷ Acts xxiv. 25.

warning and encouragement.¹ Yet many probably know and even feel more truth, than they have courage to preach. Want we then a further motive? Think of the despised Saviour in the judgment hall, "*before Pontius Pilate witnessing a good confession*"²—an example of fidelity enough to make a coward bold.

The deficiency of this spirit lowers us in the estimation of our people, by reducing us in their eyes to the mean character of time-servers, whose moral and religious integrity are alike suspected. Many who would love the 'smooth things' we should 'prophesy,' would despise us in their hearts for this accommodation afforded to their sinful indulgencies; whilst the Christian boldness of a faithful Minister awes the haters of his message, and secures the confidence of the true flock of Christ, and the approbation of his conscience in the sight of God.

SECTION II.

WISDOM—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

"WISDOM"—observes the wise king of Jerusalem, who had known its value in public instruction—"is profitable to direct."³ We may be useful without learning, but not without wisdom. This was a part of the furniture of our Divine Master for his Ministerial work; ⁴ to which both the multitude and his enemies bore ample testimony.⁵ His sermons were fraught with solemn, weighty, unmingled truth.

¹ Comp. Jer. i. 17—19. Ezek. ii. 6—8. 2 Tim. iv. 16. This thought seems to have been the last prop of Jeremiah's sinking spirit. chap. xx. 9—11.

² 1 Tim. vi. 13.

³ Eccl. x. 10. with xii. 10.

⁴ Isaiah xi. 2, 3. 1. 4.

⁵ Luke iv. 22. xxi. 40. with John vii. 46.

There was nothing crude or indigested ; but judicious appeals to Scripture, an intimate acquaintance with the heart, and a suitable adaptation of incidental occurrences and expressions to the great end of his mission ;¹ so that in every view it was the manifestation of "the wisdom of God." In the same spirit his Apostle bore testimony to his own inspired ministrations ; "teaching ever man *in all wisdom*, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."²

The wisdom which belongs to effective preaching, may include the form in which the Gospel is dispensed. The composition of our sermons should be such, that the lowest may understand, and the intelligent may have no cause to complain—that the weak may not be offended, nor the captious gratified. In order to this clearness, there must be *unity of subject*, else the minds of our hearers will be distracted ; *perspicuity of arrangement*, that they may enter into every part of the subject ; and *simplicity of diction*, that no part of it may be concealed by artificial language. The *precise view of the mind of the Spirit in the text itself* will naturally give *unity of subject*. Discernment of the *distinct character*, that is generally found in the text, will facilitate *arrangement*. The infusion of the spirit of the text (whether of an energetic or tender kind) will of itself lead to such "*plainness of speech*," that the poorest will understand.³

This wisdom in the mode and delivery of our message bears with most important influence upon Christian edification. Thus the judgment arrives at

¹ This particular of the Ministry of Christ is admirably illustrated by the Bishop of Winchester, *Minis. Char. of Christ*, ch. vi.

² Col. i. 28.

³ The writer begs particularly to refer to Mr. Simeon's short but admirable rules for composition in his edition of *Claude's Essay*, 12mo. pp. 30—34.

a clear perception of the subject—the will has a ready ground of assent—the affections an intelligent and practical excitement—the memory a stronger habit of retention—the conscience an awakened exercise. And though we cannot ascribe innate efficacy to the best disposition of our great subject, yet we must deal with rational man in a rational mode, as the appointed medium of Divine instruction. The intelligent view of Evangelical truth is therefore much hindered by an irregular distribution of the subject. When *the unity* is disturbed by the intermixture of different points, and the dissociation of the several parts—when the *arrangement* is filled up with general matter, without the explication of the main heads of the discussion—when there is but little *moulding of the mind into the spirit of the subject*—want of clearness, sympathy, and power of application is the result.

“Preaching Christ in wisdom” must imply a *just and connected view of Scriptural truth*. “A wise master-builder” not only carefully lays a right foundation, but “takes heed how he builds there-upon”—distinguishing the different qualities of his materials;¹ placing the doctrine at the foundation, and duties as proper to be built upon it; thus forming the superstructure of lively stones, growing up into a goodly edifice.² Thus will he guard against confounding what God has distinguished, and putting asunder “what God hath joined together”—often perhaps seeing reason to insist upon some points with

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

² Mark the statement of justification in the Epistle to the Galatians. The Apostle did not (as some appear to think) conceive that the view of *its simplicity* (ch. i.—iv.) was in any wise obscured by the exhibition of *its fruitfulness* (ch. v. vi.) The tree is known by its fruits, while it is distinguished from them.

more detail than others, but taking care to bring every part into its due prominence and connexion with the Christian system ; confirming and improving the whole for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness.”¹

There is the greatest possible need of this wise exhibition of the Gospel. Many will patiently listen to the practical enforcements of Christian duty, who cannot endure the Scriptural statements of the Sovereignty of God—of his free election of his people—of the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ—of the utter insufficiency of works as the ground of trust—of the helplessness of man in the act of turning to God—and the indispensable need of Divine influence to incline his heart. Many on the other hand receive the higher and mysterious doctrines of the Gospel with delight ; while they revolt from the invitations of the Gospel, and consider inculcations of the law as the rule of life, or of evangelical repentance and holiness—to be legal and unauthorized statements. Now both these extremes proceed from the same principle—a proud determination to receive a part only of the counsel of God. Both need the same corrective—a full, well-proportioned, and connected display of Christian truth—opposing the notions of self-sufficiency, without weakening the obligations to duty ; and enforcing practical obligations, without entrenching upon the Divine Sovereignty, or the freeness of divine grace.

Great indeed is the wisdom required in setting forth the analogy of faith, and the connection of the several parts of the Christian system. And from a deficiency of this just distribution of truth, much

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

of the Gospel, to neutralize the spirit of self-dependance, to which his principles might endanger him. Thus "it is possible, that the truly Scriptural statement will be found, not in an exclusive adoption of either, nor yet in a confused mixture of both, but in the proper and seasonable application of both; or, (to use the language of St. Paul) in "rightly dividing the word of truth."¹

In the large and uniform course of his work, the Minister must be skilled in personating a variety of characters, becoming a Boanerges or a Barnabas—having a word for the worldly and the spiritual, for the self-righteous and the contrite, for the wise and for the unwise, for the weak and for the strong, for the presumptuous and for the doubting, for the mourner and for the rejoicing—"a word fitly spoken" for each, which will be "like apples of gold in pictures" (or frame works) "of silver."² "Of some," that have been beguiled, he must "have compassion; making a difference" between them and obstinate offenders. "Others" he must "save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."³ It will not indeed be always wise to persevere in the same treatment with the same cases. Spiritual, like medical applications, require occasional change to strengthen the system; and thus must the applications be varied to meet the ever-varying exigencies of the several cases.⁴

Not less illustrative of the Scriptural wisdom of the pulpit Ministry is the *adaptation of instruction to the*

¹ Preface to Mr. Simeon's Helps to Composition—to which the Writer gladly refers, as a full, clear, and unfettered display of Evangelical Truth.

² Prov. xxv. 11.

³ Jude 22, 23.

⁴ A preacher must carefully observe the manners, customs, and inclinations of those whom he would persuade, that he may gain an easier admission for the truth into their mind.' *Quesnel on Acts xvii. 23.*

different stages of Christian progress in the Gospel. The Apostle compares the elementary truths of the Gospel to "milk," the proper and necessary nourishment "for babes;" the deeper and more mysterious doctrines to "strong meat," adapted to an adult state in the spiritual life, when experience is more exercised, and the judgment more matured. Our Divine teacher gently leads his children from the more simple to the higher truths, "as they are able to bear them."¹ But human teachers too often fail in forbearance to the weakness of young converts; and, expecting them to learn and receive every thing at once, they offer "strong meat" to the babes; contrary to the Apostolic prescription, and forgetting, that the spiritual, like the natural, constitution will be seriously injured by a course of unsuitable diet.² Yet while giving milk to babes, we must not forget to distribute meat to adults. The Apostle deemed it necessary to go on from the doctrine of repentance (the subject of his Master's early Ministry) "to perfection"—not indeed giving it up as unnecessary; but "leaving" it, as the builder leaves the foundation, when advancing the building to completion.³ Dr. Owen well observed—'It is the duty of Ministers of the Gospel to take care, not only that the doctrine which they preach be true, but also that it be seasonable with respect to the state and condition of their hearers. *Herein consists*

¹ Heb. v. 11—14. 1 Cor. iii. 1—3. Si pro viribus suis alatur infans, fiet, ut crescendo plus capiat; si modum suæ capacitatis excedat, deficit antequam crescat. Aug. de Civit. Dei. Lib. xii.

² Comp. Isa. xl. 11.—as illustrated by the wise and tender condescension of his public Ministry, Mark iv. 33. How remarkable is the contrast between the elementary character of his sermon on the Mount and his latter discourses, evidently adapted to a higher stage of Christian knowledge, and promising a yet more full revelation of the gospel to his Church! John xvi. 12, 13.

³ Comp. Matt. iv. 17. with Heb. vi. 1, 2.

*no small part of that wisdom, which is required in the dispensation of the word.'*¹

Much wisdom indeed is required for this diversified application of truth. In our private Ministrations indeed we can individualize each particular case; but in public addresses to hearers of different capacities and states, and under the constant influence of invisible agency often diverting the word from its course, the difficulty is painfully felt. Frequently is the tender reed bruised by a word of seasonable application to the thoughtless sinner; while the promises, too hastily rejected by the self-condemning penitent, are eagerly seized by the presumptuous, to bind the spirit of slumber more strongly upon their consciences.

This mode may sometimes be unjustly exposed to the imputation of unfaithfulness. 'Some men' (as Mr. Cecil remarks) 'seem to think, that in the choice of a wise way there lurks always a trimming disposition.'² There is doubtless considerable danger of adulterating the Gospel, in the well-intentioned endeavour to render it applicable to the endless diversity of cases. But there is an important distinction between rational contrivance and Christian accommodation. As Mr. Cecil again remarks—'It is a foolish project to avoid giving offence; but it is our duty to avoid giving unnecessary offence.' To seek to be acceptable is by no means inconsistent with Christian faithfulness. The study of the royal preacher was to "find out acceptable words."³ And why should not we, after

¹ Owen on Heb. vi. 1.

² Cecil's Remains.

³ Eccles. xii. 10. The first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs (as Dr. Wardlaw admirably observes) 'present us with a most interesting specimen of these "acceptable words." There is in them an inimitable union of admonitory fidelity, and enticing and subduing kindness. Like Paul, he "exhorts, and comforts, and

this model of instruction, endeavour to avoid an irritating and repulsive mode of statement, and to distribute unpalatable truths in the sweetness of persuasion, compassion, and sympathy?—"In doctrine," let us "show uncorruptness"¹—in mode, acceptableness—considering (after the example of our heavenly Pattern) not so much what we are able to say, as what our people are able to hear.² The Preacher's "acceptable words were upright—even words of truth;" so consistent is Ministerial fidelity with the exercise of Christian wisdom.

The state of our people will also influence the tone of our Ministrations. We must deal out "present truth"³—truth (like the doctrine of justification under the existing circumstances of the Galatian Church) adapted to the present emergency. Again—though truth itself is unalterable,—the mode of its presentment may vary. It may be brought out in the form of doctrine, precept, warning, encouragement, or privilege. It may be set forth in statement or figure; it may be illustrated by a parable; deduced from a miracle; substantiated in a Scripture character; displayed in type or prophecy; delivered from the mouth of the Lord or of his Apostle—and in all these different modes with equal simplicity and faithfulness. What a diversity of gifts do we observe in the Apostles! Peter acknowledges it in the case of himself and his "beloved brother Paul."⁴ The contrast between the Epistles of Paul and James, upon the same doctrine of justification, is even more striking. In the general complexion of his Epistles, James,

charges, as a father doth his children." The whole soul of the writer is breathed out in the earnestness of benevolent desire.⁵ Wardlaw on Eccles. xii. 10.

¹ Tit. ii. 7.

² See 2 Peter i. 12.

³ Mark iv. 33.

⁴ 2 Peter iii. 15.

though less doctrinal than his brother Paul, yet wrote under the inspiration of the same Spirit, and could commend himself by *his* "manifestation of the truth," with equal confidence "in the sight of God." Contrast again Paul with himself—Paul at Antioch and Paul at Athens—Paul before Felix and before Agrippa¹—his Epistles to the Gentile churches, compared with each other,² and with his Epistle to his own countrymen; not communicating different systems of truth, but the same system in different modes; not abandoning any part of the system, but adapting the mode of its distribution to the circumstances of the respective churches; in all cases "according to the wisdom given unto him;" and in all his Ministrations with Divine power and success.

We may here also refer to *the influence of our Christian temperament upon the character of our Ministrations*. It is natural, and under due regulation important, to carry the peculiar bias of our mind into our Ministry. Every man is formed to think, and speak, and write in a manner of his own; and he will be far more useful in preserving his own manner (improved by comparison with others, but never wholly forsaken), than by enslaving himself to some popular mode. But let it be known, watched, balanced. It has its evils as well as its advantages. A speculative mind is apt to speculate in sacred Ministration—to discuss subjects in a train of argumentation, which divests them of their heavenly unction and simplicity. An accomplished

¹ Acts xiii. xvii. xxiv. xxvi.

² With the Romans, he embraces the whole compass of Christian doctrine—with the Galatians, he is mainly occupied with the single point of justification—with the Corinthians, he largely expounds questions of casuistry, matters of discipline, and general practical duty; but all inculcated upon the foundation, and intermingled with the display, of the doctrine of Christ.

mind may be in danger, even in the Evangelical field of furnishing more food for the imagination than for the immortal soul. A doctrinal Preacher has his favourite chapters and class of subjects, which seem to comprize nearly the whole of his Ministrations. An experimental Preacher speaks according to his own spiritual exercises. If he has been awakened by the terrors of the law, his preaching will probably partake more of the character of alarm, than of tenderness and love. If he has been "drawn by the bands of love," he may be led almost unconsciously to omit the persuasive influence of the "terror of the Lord."¹ A practical Preacher has seen the looseness of profession resulting from exclusive views of doctrine or experience, and perhaps leaves his statements bare, or imperfectly connected with either. An applicatory Preacher may fail in giving clear and connected statements of doctrine. A discriminating Preacher may be in danger of perplexing his hearers with refined distinctions, drawn more immediately from his own spiritual exercises than from the clear system of the Word of God. A decided Preacher will need a deep tincture of humility, forbearance, and love; else his "zeal will be without knowledge," and his labour prove the occasion of almost unqualified offence. It is therefore an important exercise of Ministerial wisdom, not to indulge the tone of preaching which accords with the bias of our own mind, without great self-distrust, much earnest prayer, and a clear persuasion, that it passes beyond the bounds of our own

¹ See 2 Cor. v. 11. It is well that our experience should furnish materials for our Ministry; but care must be taken that the standard of our preaching be elevated, and its character formed, upon the basis of the word of God. Thus only will it be sealed with the warrant of Divine acceptance, and sympathize with all classes of Christians, as well as with the wants of the ignorant and unconverted.

individual experience—embracing within its range, alike the converted and the unconverted, and equally calculated to awaken and to establish; to “add to the Church,” and to strengthen in the Church, “such as shall be saved.”

SECTION III.

PLAINNESS—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

THE spirit of preaching consists in its adaptation to the subjects of instruction. It may be scriptural in its statements, experimental in its character, and practical in its enforcement. It may have all the features of discrimination and decision. But if it is not intelligible in its mode of address, it must fail in application to the objects proposed. Philip Henry was deeply sensible of the necessity of plain preaching—‘We study how to speak’ (said he, at the commencement of his Ministry) ‘that you may understand us; and I never think that I can speak plain enough, when I am speaking about souls and their salvation.’¹ The discourses of our Lord are a perfect model of simplicity. Never was there a more plain and popular Preacher. The most sublime truths are illustrated by the most familiar comparisons from the objects around him. Thus the beautiful figures interspersed in the sermon on the mount were probably drawn from the objects, which his elevated situation placed before him; ‘such as a city set upon a hill; persons manuring the fields with salt; the sun shining on all the fields without distinction; the fowls flying in the air, and the lilies growing about him.’² Most of his parables also were drawn from the same

¹ Life, p. 26. Compare Orton’s Life of Doddridge, chap. ii.

² Gerard’s Pastoral Care, p. 127.

natural sources. Even children's play was made to minister conviction to his hearers.¹ The fields, under his observant eye, were made fruitful in spiritual instruction;² and wherever he moved, he was the Teacher of the people according to their way and capacity. His Apostles closely followed in his steps. They felt themselves "debtors to the unwise," as well as "to the wise."³ They would neither sink beneath the dignity of their subject, nor soar above the capacities of their people. They "used great plainness of speech."⁴ Their mode of teaching, though with considerable difference of style, was brought down within the reach of the lowest intelligence. Paul dealt much in illustration, never remote, and always on subjects with which he knew his people to be conversant. The Grecian games furnished useful and pointed instruction to the churches in the neighbourhood of these pastimes, or who were conversant with them.⁵ James, in the same style of writing, crowded together the most familiar illustrations in the exhibition of a single point.⁶ Peter and John are plain and didactic. Jude, as far as we can judge from one short epistle, is energetic and expressive. All of them however in their expressions and turns of sentiment are distinguished by a remarkable perspicuity, never above the ordinary level. The discourses of the Christian Fathers were generally of the same character. Augustine's discourses are remarked to be the most simple of all his works.⁷ He

¹ Matt. xi. 16—19.

² Matt. xiii.

³ Rom. i. 14.

⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 12. Comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 19. 'Habent sacræ Scripturæ, sed non ostendunt, eloquentiam.' August. de Doctr. Christ. Lib. iv.—especially and most justly recommended by Milner to the study of Ministers. Hist. ii. pp. 441, 442.

⁵ 1 Cor. ix. Phil. iii.

⁶ See especially James iii. 1—12. and the ingenious and exquisite exposition of it in Bishop Jebb's Sacred Literature, pp. 273—308.

⁷ See quotation from his sermons in page 418.

often interrupted them to explain what might seem to be beyond the capacity of his hearers ; who would, on the other hand, sometimes express their intelligent satisfaction with his meaning. The Homilies of Chrysostom and others of that day were so called, as being delivered in a familiar and conversational mode. The sermons of our Reformers (judging from the book of Homilies and other specimens, and making allowance for the phraseology of the times) are admirable specimens of a style equally simple, forcible, and interesting. Luther tells us, that when asked by Dr. Albert the best way of preaching before the elector—‘ I said—Let all your preaching be in the most plain manner. Look not to the prince, but to the plain, simple, and unlearned people, of which cloth the prince himself is also made. If I in my preaching should have regard to Philip Melancthon, or other learned doctors, I should work but little good. I preach in the simplest sort to the unskilful, and the same giveth content to all.’

One of the ancient prophets was commanded—“ Write the vision, and *make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*”² That this command may have its due effect, we must pay attention to *style, subject-matter, and mode of address.*

A plain style is most suitable for the expression

¹ Table Talk. It was one of his sayings—‘ Optimi ad vulgus hi concionatores, qui pueriliter, populariter, et simplissime docent.’ See a beautiful anecdote characteristic of this great reformer, advising Bucer on this subject. Scott’s Continuation of Milner, vol. i. 216, 217. Adams, in his Life of Luther, has inserted some homely rhymes, which he composed for the common people. And ‘ for these beggarly ballads ’ (says a shrewd writer) ‘ Luther may receive a greater reward at the last day, than for whole shelves of learned folios. Vanity will make a man speak and write learnedly ; but piety only can prevail upon a good scholar to simplify his speech for the sake of the vulgar.’ Rev. R. Robinson’s Notes on Claude’s Essay—a work, not devoid of information or interest ; but painfully distinguished by an unchristian—vituperative spirit.

² Hab. ii. 2.

of plain things. And here, it is probable, many of us may have much to unlearn. Our minds are formed in the beauty and accuracy of classical arrangement; from which there must be a descent to accomplish the great end of our commission. 'A preacher' (as Bishop Burnet decides) 'is to fancy himself in the room of the most unlearned man in his whole parish; and therefore he must put such parts of his discourse as he would have all understand, in so plain a form, that it may not be beyond the meanest of them. This he will certainly study to do, if his desire is to edify them, rather than to make them admire himself as a learned and high-spoken man.'¹ To this end, short sentences and simple diction are of the utmost importance. *Perspicuity of idea* is even, if possible, more essential. Many will comprehend, or successfully guess at, the meaning of a hard word, who would be baffled by a complex idea. 'Parenthesis and circumlocution' (it is justly remarked) 'deprive expression of its edge; and the idea, attenuated by frequent tropes and figures, arrives at the mind of the hearer, like an arrow spent in its flight,'² and rather serves to startle than to impress. Archbishop Secker judiciously recommends (as a means of winning the attention of our people) 'to make our sermons extremely clear. Terms and phrases' (he remarks to his Clergy) 'may be familiar to you, which are quite unintelligible to them; and I fear this happens much oftener than we suspect; therefore guard against it. Your expressions may be very common, without being low; yet employ the lowest (provided they are not ridiculous) rather than not be understood.'³ It is a frequent mistake to take

¹ Burnet's Pastoral Care, ch. ix.

² Budd on Infant Baptism, pp. 493, 494.

³ Charges, pp. 273, 274. Augustine continually reverts to this

too much for granted. Fenelon's remark is applicable to many Protestant congregations—'that there are always three quarters of an ordinary congregation, who do not know those first principles of religion, with which the preacher supposes every one to be fully instructed.'¹ We must remember, that our commission extends to the explanation of the words, as well as of the things, of God. The meaning is discovered in the word, and cannot be discovered without it. There are many important Scriptural terms, whose meaning is little, if at all, understood by the mass; so that a want of verbal explanations is often a great hinderance to edification. We must not judge the extent of the people's information by our own. The inquiry—'Have ye understood these things?'—would never be unseasonable; while the expression of a wish to be understood would be attractive and engaging. Our explanations should always, however, be as brief as the subject will admit of: for, after all, it will be found, that a popular view of the simplest elementary principles is the best introduction to more extended and accurate views of truth.

Nor is this style of simplicity degrading to the most intellectual mind. We could do no more with "the

subject. He did not scruple to say—'Melius est, ut nos reprehendant grammatici, quam ut non intelligant populi.' In Ps. *cxix.* 15. Thus in one of his sermons to the same purport—'Rogo humiliter, ut contentæ sint eruditæ aures vestræ verba rustica æquanimiter sustinere, dummodo totus grex Domini simplici, et, ut ita dicam, pedestri sermone, pabulum spirituale possit accipere; et, quia imperiti et simplices ad scholasticorum altitudinem non possunt ascendere, eruditi se dignentur ad illorum ignorantiam se inclinare.' Quesnel remarks—'That a man need not fear stooping too low, when he considers himself as the dispenser of the mysteries of abased wisdom. The gospel is more for the poor and simple than for refined wits; and yet a Minister thereof is sometimes (as one may say) afraid of being understood by the simple, lest he should not be admired by the learned.' On Mark iv. 33.

¹ Dialogues on Eloquence, iii.

² Matt. xiii. 51.

tongues of angels," than communicate our ideas intelligibly to one another—an exercise, which many preachers, of excellent literary endowments, have found to require considerable pains and diligence.¹ Not, however, that, in our labour for "plainness of speech, we would strip the Gospel of its dignified terseness, beautiful illustration, and heavenly elevation. Nor would we recommend a style of naked simplicity in our addresses. Our Lord's example, as that of the simplest of Preachers, seems to recommend an infusion of the illustrative style into our discourses. And indeed natural images are found most useful in the elucidation of spiritual things, by their palpable exhibition to the

¹ Quintilian excellently observes, that our meaning, 'like the light of the sun, should obtrude itself upon the eyes of the ignorant, not only without any pains to search for it, but, as it were, whether he will or not.' Institut. Lib. viii. cap. 2. Rollin has the same illustration. Belles Lettres. vii. Luther used to say—'To preach plain and simply is a great art.' Table Talk. Archbishop Usher observed—'It requires all our learning to make things plain.' Bishop Wilkins observes—'the greatest learning is to be seen in the greatest plainness. The more clearly we understand any thing ourselves, the more easily can we expound it to others.' Wilkins's Eccles. p. 168. (The character that Photius gave of the preaching of Athanasius will confirm this point. 'In sermonibus ubique in locutione clarus est, et brevis, et simplex, *acutus tamen et ultus.*') Bishop Hurd charged his clergy to the same purport—'Your sermons cannot well be too plain: and I need not say unto you who hear me—that to frame a discourse in this way, as it is the usefulest way of preaching, so it will afford full scope and exercise for all the talents, which the ablest of us may possess.' Bishop Hurd's Charges. Archbishop Tillotson is said to have been 'in the habit of reading his sermons to an illiterate old woman of plain sense who lived with him, and of altering his words and expressions, till he had brought the style down to her level.' If the story be true, 'it is' (as Professor Campbell observes) 'much to the prelate's honour; for, however incompetent such judges might be of the composition, the doctrine, or the arguments, they are certainly the most competent judges of what terms and phrases fall within the apprehension of the vulgar, the class to which they belong.' Campbell on Pulpit Eloquence, Lect. iii. Compare Fenelon on Eloquence, ut supra. Perhaps however the poet's rule—'Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem'—expresses the whole in the fewest words.

senses. To obtain a correct mode of illustration, the study of the Scripture metaphors is of the highest importance, in marking their exquisite adaptation to the subjects of reference. Remote images (from which no clear light can be obtained) should be avoided. Every thing bordering upon the ridiculous, light, or trifling, must be discountenanced as being utterly inconsistent with the dignity and holiness of the Sacred Volume, and 'with that Divine powerful delivery, which becometh him that speaks the oracles of God.'¹ Only that which is serious has a tendency to permanent edification.

The vanity of learned preaching is proved by unproductiveness. The most holy preachers are commonly the plainest and the most successful.² It might as well think of adding clearness to light, or hope to embellish the simplicity of the Gospel with rhetorical expression.³ Such embellishments, allowed at all, should be sparingly used.⁴ King aptly compared them in public discourses 'red and blue flowers, that pester the corn, stands in the fields; more noisome to the crop, than beautiful to the beholding eye.'

¹ Ward's Coal from the Altar. Comp. Bowles' Past. Lib. ii. c. 10.

² Archbishop Leighton, after hearing a plain and homely sermon with entire satisfaction, observed—'This good man seems earnest to catch souls.' 'The measure of speech' (best) remarks ought to be the character of the audience, which is made up of the most part of illiterate persons.' Pearson's Life, p. lix.

³ What has been said of commentators, may apply to preachers who attempt this—that their subjects were plain until they expounded them.

⁴ Augustine's animadversion was—'Numquid hic ornamenta et non documenta queruntur?' De Doctr. Christiana Lib. i. ut supra. Not that he was wholly averse to ornament. His style of the style of discourses was most just—'Nec inornatam relinquit nec indecenter ornatam.' Ib. iv. 26.

⁵ Preface to his Remonstrance—'Preachers' (remarks B

extensive influence of such a paralyzing and unevangelical system would be most foreboding to the church. The true glory and dignity of the pulpit would sink into a stage exhibition of self-display. 'The sword of the Spirit' (to use a terse illustration of an old Divine) would be 'put into a velvet scabbard, that it cannot prick and wound the heart.'¹

Plainness in the choice of our subjects marks also the spirit of Scriptural preaching. We may here attend to the excellent advice of the Primitive Bishop Wilson—'Avoid' (says he) 'such discourses and subjects, as would divert the mind without instructing it. Never consult your own fancy in the choice of subjects, but the necessities of the flock. I would rather send away the hearers smiting their breasts, than please the most learned audience with a fine sermon against any vice. With what truth can it be said, that "the sheep hear your voice," when you speak matters above their capacities, or in language and tones which they do not understand? It is too often, that preachers perplex those whom they should instruct. There is a great deal of difference between people admiring the preacher, and being edified by his sermons.'² *Metaphysical preaching* would come under these animadversions. Dr. Dwight (a man whose mind had a strong natural bias of this character) admirably observes—"All preaching of this kind is chiefly useless, and commonly mischievous.

beauties of eloquence? Shall truths and counsels like these be couched in terms, which the poor and ignorant cannot comprehend?'—See his *Rémains*.

¹ Ward's *Coal from the Altar*.

² *Sacra Privata*, Works, vol. i. 253. 'Let all your performances' (said the excellent Matthew Henry) 'be plain and Scriptural. Choose for your pulpit subjects the plainest and most needful truths, and endeavour to make them plainer.'—*Williams' Life*, p. 122.

No ordinary congregation ever understood, to any valuable purpose, metaphysical subjects; and no congregation, it is believed, was ever much edified by a metaphysical manner of discussion.¹ We would not encourage a superficial treatment of more elaborate subjects: but let all reasoning be grounded upon the simple principles of Scripture, rather than upon inductive or excursive philosophy. All subjects of 'intrusion into things which we have not seen'²—all questions not directly tending to edification (such as the Apostle denominates "old wives' fables," "vain babblings," "foolish questions"³) are to be avoided. The weeping prophet mourned over his desolated city—"Thy prophets have seen *vain and foolish things* for thee."⁴ And every serious Christian must respond to this complaint, when he sees some Ministers (to use the quaint but expressive language of Bishop Hall) 'picking straws in Divinity;' others substituting husks for the bread of life, scholastic or metaphysical distinctions, curious researches into antiquity, ingenious dissertations upon the fitness of things, abstract proofs of the evidences of Christianity, elucidations merely critical of the sacred text, for the simple and palatable exhibition of "the truth

¹ Dwight's Theology, v. 209, 210. 'That which metaphysical preaching teaches' (as he elsewhere remarks) 'may be true, and the arguments used to support it may be sound; but the distinctions are so subtle, and the reasoning so abstruse and difficult, that the hearer's attention to the truth is lost in his attention to the preacher's ingenuity; his mind prevented from feeling what is intended, by the absorption of his thoughts in the difficulties of the argument; and his heart chilled by the cold manner in which all such discussions are conducted. The metaphysician, whether aware of it or not, is employed in displaying his own ingenuity, and not in disclosing and confirming the truth of God.' Sermons, Vol. ii. 461. Comp. Burnet's Past. Care, ch. ix.

² Col. ii. 18.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 7. vi. 20. Tit. iii. 9.

⁴ Lam. ii. 14.

as it is in Jesus." 'The hungry sheep look up and are not fed.'

We might refer to *the plausible ground of dissent* arising from this preaching, as a minor consideration for Ministers of the Establishment¹ (for our people will soon be tired of hearing what they do not understand); but a far *higher responsibility* is contracted than *dissent*. It may be that the grammarian, the critic, the theologian, approve our discourses. But in preaching to an illiterate congregation of perishing sinners, should we not use, as the grand vehicle of our communication—"words easy to be understood?" If they do not understand their preacher, they "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." For how can they be saved by the preaching of the Gospel in an unknown tongue? And of how little account will be the reputation of an accurate logician, deep theologian, or orthodox Divine, under the weight of this awful charge!²

A plain mode of address is also included in the spirit of preaching. A want of plain dealing with

¹ Dr. Johnson (see Boswell's Life) with much truth ascribes the success of the Methodists, in drawing away the Members of the Establishment, to their plain mode of address. King James in a curious document, entitled—"The Reason of the King's Direction for Preaching and Preachers"—traces the many defections to Popery, and Anabaptism, or other points of separation, to the 'lightness, affectedness, and unprofitableness,' of the preachers in his day, 'mustering up of much reading, or displaying of their wits,' leaving the people's mind, 'for all this airy nourishment, no better than mere table books, ready to be filled up with the catechism of the Popish priests, or the pamphlets of the Anabaptists.'

² 'I had rather' (said Dr. John Edwards) be fully understood by ten, than be admired by ten thousand. If our words be not understood, it is of no consequence in what language they are spoken, and we cannot expect that the Holy Spirit will give a blessing on unintelligible language—I mean—unintelligible to the many, though a few of superior attainments or refinements may admire them.'

our people will inevitably betray their souls, and ours with them. We are engaged with them on subjects connected with eternity, on which mistakes are so various and so fatal. It is of far higher moment, that we should be useful than eloquent, that the watchman should blow the trumpet intelligibly than elegantly. Nothing is done, until we bring them into immediate contact with their imminent, unseen, unsuspected danger. Let this plainness embrace all the variety of illustration, argumentation, appeal, and entreaty. Let it include the enforcement of every motive of terror and of love, of warning and of encouragement. But let there be a careful separation from meretricious embellishments,¹ a freedom from a false scrupulosity of tenderness, and an unreserved devotedness to the one object of the Christian Ministry; applying always the message of the Gospel in clear and uncompromising terms; and pursuing sin and Satan in a course of unwearied warfare, until they are dispossessed of all their strong holds, and "every thought is brought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ."

SECTION IV.

FERVENCY—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

To enlighten the minds, and affect the hearts of our people, are the two main ends of the Christian Ministry. The first demands *wisdom and plainness*—the second, *fervency*—as the spirit of Scriptural preaching. This combination exhibits the Minister

¹ Bishop Stillingfleet compares this mode of treatment to 'stroking the consciences of people with feathers dipped in oil.' Duties and Rights of Parochial Clergy, p. 30.

as “a burning and shining light” — ‘the sun in his sphere’ (as Pavillon, the celebrated Bishop of Alet, describes him) ‘imparting the spiritual light of Divine truth, as well as the spiritual heat of Divine fervour.’ With regard to fervency—if it be natural to express ourselves with earnestness upon subjects of deep and acknowledged interest—much more in the delivery of the Gospel commission. ‘Nothing’ (says Baxter) ‘is more indecent than a dead preacher speaking to dead sinners the living truth of the living God.’ It were surely better to subject ourselves to the misapprehension of being “beside ourselves,”¹ than not to deliver our Divine message with some evidence of personal impression. As a matter of life and death—of eternal life and eternal death—it is connected with the most powerful motives, and acts upon the most influential principles of the heart. Charles V. remarked of one of the German Reformers—‘He preached with such spirit and devotion, as might almost serve to make the very stones weep.’ Such was the spirit of our Divine Master,² and of his chosen Apostle.³ The same spirit constituted the main power of Whitfield’s Ministry. There have been men of like unction, faith, and prayer—men whose views of the gospel have been equally comprehensive, and whose love for souls has been equally fervent; but it was the picture of his whole soul portrayed in his countenance;⁴ his expressions cast into the most awakening

¹ 2 Cor. v. 13. Comp. Acts ii. 12, 13. ‘So long as our zeal takes not its colour from human infirmities and human passions, but is regulated by the word of God; so long as we tread in the steps of those, who “did all things decently and in order;” far from having to apologize for our zeal, we should think that we act unworthily of our cause, if we possessed it not.’ The Gospel Message, by Rev. Dr. Dealtry, p. 21.

² John ii. 17.

³ Acts xvii. 16.

⁴ The description given of an old foreign preacher would give an

and penetrating forms; the solemnity of his address; the deep feeling from within, bursting forth in every word, streaming in his eyes, and breathing an energy of love throughout the effusions of his overflowing heart—this it was that convinced the listening throngs, that he was not trifling with them. They caught sympathy with his natural eloquence, and, in thousands of instances, “the flint was turned into a fountain of waters;” and his Ministry, to a large extent, was life from the dead “to his fellow-sinners.” ‘This faculty of moving hearers thus’ (Archbishop Secker remarks) ‘is a most valuable blessing. And such as have but little of it, may considerably improve it, by labouring to affect themselves more deeply with what they would say, and thinking what methods of saying it would be most persuasive.’ But (as he elsewhere observes) ‘smooth discourses’ to our people, ‘containing little that awakens their drowsy attention, little that enforces on them plainly and home “what they must do to be saved,” leave them as ignorant and unreformed as ever, and only lull them into a fatal security.’¹ Even Bishop Warburton decides, that ‘a pathetic address to the passions and affections of penitent hearers, is perhaps the most operative of all

accurate sketch of Whitfield in the pulpit—‘*Vivida in eo omnia fuerunt; vivida vox, vividi oculi, vividi manus, gestus omnes vividi.*’ His ingenuous confessions at the close of life, of a tincture of enthusiasm, and an occasional admixture of his own spirit with his Ministry, eminently displayed Christian humility. As Fuller memorialized the celebrated Wickliff in his characteristic style—‘I intend neither to deny, dissemble, defend, or excuse any of his faults. “We have this treasure” (says the Apostle) “in *earthen vessels*;” and he that shall endeavour to prove a pitcher of clay to be a pot of gold, will take great pains to small purpose. Yea, should I be over-officious to retain myself to plead for Wickliff’s faults, that glorious saint would sooner chide than thank me.’ Church History, Book iv.

¹ Charges, pp. 284, 252.

the various species of instruction.' ¹ George Herbert's Country Parson, 'when he preacheth, procures attention by all possible art:—by earnestness of speech; it being natural to men to think, that where there is much earnestness, there is something worth hearing.'² Nothing indeed can be more repugnant to the simple dignity of the Ministerial character, than attempts at theatrical display, or affectation of emotion, that has no correspondence with the heart. A painted fire may glare, but it will not warm. Violent agitations, without corresponding tenderness of feeling, will disgust instead of arresting the mind. Preaching is not (as some appear to consider it) the work of the lungs, or the mimicry of gesture, or the impulse of uncontrollable feeling; but the exercise of love, the spiritual energy of a heart constrained by the love of Christ, and devoted to the care of those immortal souls, for whom Christ died. Yet it may be presumed, that the habit of realizing our Master's presence, and the awful responsibility vested in us, will find expression in something beyond the tone of tame seriousness, and the general accuracy of pulpit decorum.³ The Country Parson finds the people 'thick and heavy, and hard to raise to a point of zeal and fervency, and needing a mountain of fire to kindle them.' He recommends therefore most beautifully, the 'dipping and seasoning all our words and sentences in our hearts, before they come into our mouths; truly affecting, and cordially expressing all that we can say, so that our auditors may plainly perceive,

¹ Directions to Students of Theology.

² Chapter vii.

³ 'While I have any reverence for Scripture, or any knowledge of human nature, I shall never affect to speak of the glories of Christ, and of the eternal interests of man, as coldly, as if I were reading a lecture of mathematics, or relating an experiment in natural philosophy.' Dr. Doddridge—Orton's Life, ch. v.

that every word is heart-deep.'¹ A lively impression of interest seems the natural result of a cordial belief of the Gospel; and therefore a want of expression of this interest as naturally conveys a suspicion of the credibility of our message. For who could bring a *true* report of a fire, or of any extraordinary news, with a calm tone, gentle voice, or elegant expressions? And can we wonder, that a cold correctness in the delivery of our instructions should produce in our people a disbelief of their truth, or at least of their importance; that they should consider it to be a work of office, for which we are paid, rather than as a matter of personal concern to themselves: and that, with such impressions, they should want the disposition necessary to give to preaching its due effect—a desire to hear? Indeed, so unnatural is it thus to speak of weighty subjects, that they would rather take a slight matter expressed with vehemence to be important, than they would believe an important matter to be really so, when conveyed in a lifeless manner.² It has been well remarked—that 'the really useful man in winning souls to Christ is he, who is so penetrated with the value of the doctrines of the Gospel, as to persuade by the zeal and sincerity of his manners, when a less earnest mode of teaching would have failed to convince.'³ Phlegmatic constitutions are not indeed capable of much excitement; but inces-

¹ Chap. vii.

² See Sir R. Blackmore's *Accomplished Preacher*, Sect. viii. May we not learn a lesson of conviction from Garrick's reply to a preacher, who asked—'How is it, that you, who deal in nothing but fiction, can so affect your audience, as to throw them into tears; while we, who deliver the most awful and interesting truths, can scarcely produce any effect whatever?' *Here lies the secret; you deliver your truths as if they were fictions; but we deliver our fictions as if they were truth.*

³ Bishop of Winchester's *Ministerial Character of Christ*, p. 70.

sant prayer and watchfulness will have their effect in resisting constitutional languor; while actual preparation will quicken Divine affections, and bring them warm into immediate exercise for the enlivening of our people.

A want of fervency in our Ministrations is a serious hinderance to their efficiency. For though it is the same word, however preached; yet an earnest delivery adds to the naked truth the sensible exhibition of Divine love, and moves one of the most enlivening springs of conviction.¹ On the other hand (as a sensible writer has observed) ‘the monotonous wearisome sound of a single bell may be almost as soon expected to excite moral impressions, as the general tenor of public discourses, drowsily composed, and drowsily delivered.’² Our people want their hearts, as well as their understandings, to be addressed. Piercing words, in the spirit of compassionate entreaty and seriousness, are needed to give practical influence to convincing argument. However this fervid spirit may be mistaken for enthusiasm, it is only the expression of a heart deeply impressed with the conviction, that religion is a matter of the first moment, and of immediate and universal concern.³ But which

¹ Cicero (De Orat.) calls this lively representation *evidence* (*evidentia*)—the orator not seeming so much to speak, as to shew the very things themselves as if they were before the eyes. Quinfilian’s term is *vision*. Instit. Lib. viii.

² Jerningham’s Essay on the Eloquence of the English Pulpit, prefixed to a Translation of Select Sermons from Bossuet.

³ This is well borne out and illustrated by an eminent writer, who has never been suspected of giving encouragement to enthusiasm—‘The chief characteristics of the eloquence suited to the pulpit, as distinguished from the other kinds of public speaking, appear to me to be these two—gravity and *warmth*. The serious nature of the subjects belonging to the pulpit requires gravity—*their importance to mankind requires warmth*.’ Dr. Blair’s Lectures, Lect. xxix.—On the Eloquence of the Pulpit. Again he remarks—‘Gravity and warmth united, form that character of

of us is not constrained to allow the inconsistency of apparent earnestness in the pulpit, with the general habit of cold and lifeless affections? To ascend the pulpit with a heart full of life, zeal, and love, is not a matter of course; yet, when “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” what unction seems to pervade the word! what a power of sympathy affects our people!

Baxter’s impassioned pleadings shew what our addresses ought to be in order to give full effect to our message. ‘How thin’ (exclaims he) ‘are those Ministers, that are serious in this work! Nay, how mightily do the best fail in this! Do we cry out of men’s disobedience to the Gospel “in the demonstration of the Spirit,” and deal with sin as the destroying fire in our towns, and by force pull men out of it? Do we persuade our people, as those should, who “know the terror of the Lord?” Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness, believing, that without these men can never have life? Do our bowels yearn over the ignorant, careless, and obstinate multitude? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we should never see their faces in rest? Do we, as St. Paul, “tell them weeping,” of their fleshly and earthy disposition? and “teach them publicly, and from house to house,” at all seasons and with many tears? And do we entreat them, as for their soul’s salvation? Or rather, do we not study to gain the approbation of critical hearers; as if a Minister’s business were of no more weight, but to tell a smooth tale for an hour, and look no more after the

preaching which the French call *onction*—the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the Preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire, that they make a full impression on the hearts of his hearers.

people till the next sermon? Does not carnal prudence control our fervour, and make our discourses lifeless on subjects the most piercing? How gently we handle those sins, which will so cruelly handle our people's souls! In a word—our want of seriousness about the things of heaven, charms the souls of men into formality, and brings them into this customary careless hearing, which undoes them'—'I know not what others think,' (says he in another place) 'but for my own part, I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself, that I deal not with my own and others' souls, as one that looks for the great day of the Lord; and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words, and that such astonishing matters do not wholly absorb my mind. I marvel, how I can preach of them slightly and coldly; and how I can let men alone in their sins; and that I do not go to them, and beseech them for the Lord's sake to repent, however they take it, or whatever pains or trouble it should cost me! I seldom come out of the pulpit, but my conscience smites me, that I have been no more serious and fervent in such a case. It accuses me not so much for want of human ornaments or elegance—but it asketh me—'How couldst thou speak of life and death with such a heart?' The God of mercy pardon me, and awaken me with the rest of his servants, that have been thus sinfully negligent. O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity and hard-heartedness ourselves; or else how shall we be fit instruments of saving others from it.'¹

¹ Reformed Pastor.

SECTION V.

DILIGENCE—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

How instructive is the constant eyeing of our Divine Pattern,¹ with his whole heart, his whole time, engaged in his Father's work ! His greatest diligence, however, was concentrated in his public Ministry. "He taught," when at Jerusalem, "*daily* in the temple ;" and wherever else a concourse was gathered, he was ready to open his mouth for hortatory, didactic, or illustrative instruction.² The first labourers of the Gospel, and the Fathers of the early church closely followed their Master's example.³

The Apostle contemplated far greater danger from sloth than from excessive activity in preaching the word. He adjures therefore his beloved Timothy by the solemn view and anticipations of the day of account—to "be instant in season, and *out of season* ;"⁴ not only regular in the routine of preaching seasons ; but under the guidance of an enlightened conscience, embracing opportunities that might appear unseasonable, and ready to improve every unlooked-for call to service. And what is there in the present day, that renders this diligence less necessary, less binding, or less effectual ? Is not the mass of unconverted hearers as large with us, as in the primitive church ? And how can Christ's sheep among them "hear his voice" without a Preacher ?⁵ No other

¹ Luke xix. 47. xxi. 37. xxii. 53.

² John vii. 37. Matt. v. xiii.

³ Acts v. 42. xix. 9. xxviii. 23. and notices in the Homiletical writings of the Fathers. Comp. Jer. xxvi. 5. Hag. ii. 10, 20.

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

⁵ John x. 16, 27. with Rom. x. 14.

medium will supersede this appointed channel of Divine communications.¹

The frequency of Sabbath preaching must depend upon physical strength and other circumstances, over which there can be no control. Where the heart is really engaged in the work, the willingness of the spirit will be in general only restrained by the weakness of the flesh. A double exercise of our duty begins to be called for by the concurrent voices of our Diocesans. A familiar repetition of one of these exercises would profitably and popularly furnish a third service, should this addition be found either desirable or practicable. Few minds could long support the labour and excitement of bringing forth three successive subjects. Nor indeed could the digestive powers of our people healthfully receive so large a quantity of food; whereas the system of repetition assists instead of loading the digestion.

Much more is implied in this diligence, than the formal routine of a Sabbath address. Such an infrequent and mechanical exhibition ill represents the parental obligations subsisting between a pastor and his flock. Would a father be satisfied with this feeble periodical admonition, when his beloved son was in continual and most imminent danger?

The annals of our Hierarchy will furnish exciting examples of preaching diligence. Hooper was not one of the 'unpreaching prelates,' who excited honest Latimer's indignation and remonstrance. He would say, 'that no Bishop ought to complain of one sermon a-day.'² Probably his own custom exceeded these

¹ The apostle, though keeping up intercourse with the Thessalonians by his pen, still desired to see their face, for their better advantages of Christian instruction. 1 Thess. iii. 10.

² 'Fifteen masses a day did not suffice for the priests of Baal; and yet one sermon a day seems more than a good Bishop or

bounds. Fox informs us, that, 'being Bishop of two dioceses (Gloucester and Worcester), he yet so ruled and guided either of them and both together, as though he had in charge but one family. No father in his household, no gardener in his garden, nor husbandman in his vineyard, was more or better occupied, than he in his diocese among his flock, going about his towns and villages in teaching and preaching to the people there.' Bishop Jewell's saying—'A Bishop ought to die preaching'—was strikingly confirmed in his own death, which appears to have been hastened, if not to have been caused, by the ardour of his Episcopal zeal.¹ Of Bishop Matthew (Bishop of Durham in Queen Elizabeth's day's, and subsequently translated to York) it was said, that 'it was easy to trace his journies by the churches he preached at.' The most inveterate haters of prelacy were silenced by the example of this Apostolic Bishop.² Preaching he used to call 'his beloved work,' from which he did not consider himself to be discharged even by the government of the province of York, so that a challenge was thrown out to Popery—'That Tobias Matthew, the Archbishop of York, though almost Evangelical Pastor can bear.'—Hooper's Confession delivered to the King and Parliament, 1550. Daily preaching was Chrysostom's rule for a Bishop (doubtless with application to subordinate Ministers.) *De Sacer. Lib. vi. 4.* If the letter of the rule be impracticable, let us at least endeavour to approximate to its standard and spirit.

¹ The motto at the bottom of a curious portrait of Jewell preserved in Salisbury Palace is—'Væ mihi, si non evangelizavero!' This was also the motto of Usher's own selection for his Archbishopal seal—illustrated by his increasing constancy in preaching, subsequent to his elevation. These instances (with that cited below) exemplify Augustine's just views of the Episcopal office—'Episcopatus nomen est operis, non honoris—Intelligat se, non esse Episcopum, qui præesse dilexerit, non prodesse.' *Aug. de Civit. Dei. Lib. xix. c. 19.*

² No mention of Archbishop Matthew occurs in Prynne's celebrated work of invective against prelates.

eighty years of age, preacheth more sermons in a year, than you (the Popish party) can prove have been preached by all your Popes from Gregory the Great's days.'¹

The examples of Grimshaw and Wesley, in days nearer our own time, may well serve to stimulate to greater devotedness to our public employ. Twelve or fourteen preaching engagements were included in Mr. Grimshaw's idle week. The number was doubled, in what he called his working week.² Wesley is calculated to have preached upwards of forty-thousand sermons (exclusive of a large number of exhortations) during a course of itinerancy of nearly fifty years, and an average annual ratio of travelling four thousand five hundred miles. Whatever irregularity or enthusiasm belonged to their unprecedented labours, the large success with which they were honoured, displayed the main-spring of their exertion—"the love of Christ constraining them."³ Let not our censure of their irregular system hinder us from transferring an impulse of zeal, self-denial, and self-devotedness, to a more chastised course of Ministration.

But preaching diligence includes not only frequency of employ, but constant repetition of truth. The workman is more anxious to fasten one nail by reiterated blows, than slightly to fix many upon the outward surface. To preach "the same things is not grievous" to the Christian Minister; and for his people it is often "safe."⁴ The fruitfulness of the earth arises from its "drinking in the rain that cometh oft upon it." The constant repetition,—not the weight—of the heavenly showers makes impressions on the hardest

¹ Granger's Biog. Hist. Vol. i. p. 343.

² Newton's Life of Grimshaw, p. 51.

³ 2 Cor. v. 14.

⁴ Phil. iii. 1.

SINGLENESSE, IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. 437

substances. That our "doctrine" therefore may "drop as the rain,"¹ it must fall not only in the gentleness of love, but in the frequency of diligence.² The constant enforcement of fundamental truths is necessary for their deeper and more practical influence. Truths that have been marked out by gainsayers or seducers, must form prominent topics of our Ministry. Truths also of daily use and practice, will be sound doctrine to preach to the end of our course;³ not however in the slothful repetition of our former discourses, but in waiting at our Master's feet for fresh instruction; always learning, and teaching what we have learned.

SECTION VI.

SINGLENESSE—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

' THE Ministerial work must be managed purely for God and the salvation of the people, and not for any private ends of our own. This is our sincerity in it. A wrong end makes all the work bad from us, however good in itself. Self-denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian; but of a double necessity in a Minister, as he hath a double sanctification and dedication to God. And without self-denial he cannot do God an hour's faithful service. Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching, is but more glorious hypocritical sinning, if the ends be not right.'⁴ The main end in the employ of the Ministry is the glory of God.

¹ Deut. xxxii. 2. with Heb. vi. 7.

² Isa. xxviii. 10.

³ The apostle exhorts to pulpit diligence by a most foreboding anticipation. 2 Tim. iv. 2, 3.

⁴ Baxter's Reformed Pastor.

It is 'the single eyeing' of this end, that 'makes all things sweet and holy.'¹ This was the purpose, that filled the heart and directed the course of our Great Exemplar.² This was also the spirit of the Apostle;³ as indeed it is the true spirit of the Christian Minister—the result of serious self-scrutiny, and often of severe spiritual conflict. Experience (for it must plainly be more a matter of experience than of observation) assures us of the extreme difficulty of preaching with singleness of heart. How much of our study in *the very composition of our sermons*, flows from a selfish principle, and rolls on in the same corrupt channel! *In the pulpit* itself—in our Master's immediate presence—what is it that sometimes gives animation to our delivery, tone to our voice, and emphasis to our words? Are we never "preaching ourselves" in the very form and act of preaching "Christ Jesus the Lord?" If in the impulse of the moment, any forcible matter falls from us, how seldom is it unaccompanied with self-complacency, expectation of present effect, or disappointment in its failure! How hard is it to preach without undue regard to the approbation of the Christian or intelligent part of our congregation! What a struggle often to repress the apprehension of being considered *common-place*, or the desire to be original and powerful! How difficult thus to sink our gifts in the grace of humility, and to suppress what might recommend us to men of taste and talent, in order to clothe the same sentiment in a less imposing but a more useful garb! How natural the desire rather to know whether the sermon has been approved, than whether it has been profitably applied! And when we feel that we have made but an indifferent

¹ Leighton.² John viii. 50. v. 41.³ 1 Thess. ii. 6.

figure, it is as if we had missed the prize of the day. Thus is the desire of usefulness selfishly connected with the honour of our own name, when we cannot bear that "our God should humble us among" our flock, and that they should think of us as vessels of inferior value—of "wood and earth"—rather than "of gold and of silver."¹

Baxter's serious remarks are equally applicable to our own day, as to his—'Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what baits there are in the work of the Ministry to entice a man to be selfish, that is, to be carnal and impious, even in the highest works of piety. The fame of a godly man is as great a snare as the fame of a learned man. And woe to him that takes up with *the fame of godliness* instead of godliness! "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." When the times were all for learning and empty formalities, then the temptation of the proud did lie that way. But now, through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most lively practical preaching is in credit, and godliness itself is in credit: and now the temptation to proud men is here, even to pretend

¹ See Solomon's wise aphorism, Prov. xxv. 27. It is said of one of the ancient Fathers that he would weep at the applause that was frequently given to his sermons. 'Would to God' (said he) 'they had rather gone away silent and thoughtful!' 'Docente in Ecclesia, non clamor populi, sed gemitus suscitatur. Lachrymæ auditorum laudes tuæ sunt.'—Hieron. ad Nepot. 'Libenter vocem audio, non qui sibi plausum, sed qui mihi planctum movet.' Bern. Serm. 59. Cantic. 'I love a serious preacher, who speaks for my sake, and not for his own, who seeks my salvation, and not his own vain-glory.' Fenelon's Letter to the French Academy, Sect. 4, p. 230. 'Surely' (exclaims Dr. Chalmers) 'it were a sight to make angels weep, when a weak and vapouring mortal, surrounded by his fellow-sinners, and hastening to the grave and the judgment along with them—finds it a dearer object to his bosom, to regale his hearers by the exhibition of himself, than to do in plain earnest the work of his Master, and urge on the business of repentance and faith by the impressive simplicities of the Gospel!' Sermons—ut supra. p. 25.

to be zealous preachers and godly men. O what a fine thing doth it seem, to have the people crowd to hear us, and to be affected with what we say, and that we can command their judgments and affections! To have the people call you "the chariots and horsemen of Israel"—to have them depend upon you, and be ruled by you, though this may be no more than their duty, yet a little grace may serve to make you seem zealous men for them. *Nay*, pride may do it without any special grace.'¹

Perhaps indeed the character of the present age is peculiarly adverse to this singleness of spirit. The love of novelty, and the idolatry of intellect, are besetting snares, by which the subtle enemy "corrupts" the church "from the simplicity that is in Christ."² It is difficult for Ministers, to preserve the tone of their instructions wholly uninfluenced by these temptations. There is great danger, lest we provide more food for the understanding than for the heart; and lest the important opportunities of close application to the conscience be frittered away in prurient fancies, ingenious theories, and elaborate composition; than which nothing is more hurtful to the spirituality of our Ministrations, in occupying our secret retirement with men-pleasing contrivances, rather than with diligent waiting upon God, for an enlarged spiritual unction upon our work. This danger of making our office a stepping-stone to selfish indulgence, is acknow-

¹ Reformed Pastor. 'That which many times causes uneasiness in Pastors, is a principle of self-love, which prompts us to seek a private unwarranted delight in that change of men's minds, which we have effected. The spirit of man pleases itself with the success of its own travail; and when we seem to propose no other aim but God's glory, the deceitfulness of self-love is less capable of discovery.' Bishop Godeau's Past. Instructions, pp. 44, 45.

² 2 Cor. xi. 3.

ledged by the most eminent Ministers. The following exercises from the diary of a late excellent Minister strike a chord of sympathy with many of us—‘ I have to observe in my mind a sinful anxiety to preach well, rather than a holy anxiety to preach usefully. I fear I rather seek my own honour than God’s. I confess this sin ; I trust I repent of it from my heart : I hope for its forgiveness, and its removal from my breast.’ Again—‘ The evening spoiled with wretched pride and self-complacency—a mischievous weed, deep-rooted, which all my winter seasons have not yet killed. O may it at length be rooted out ! ’ ¹ It was therefore seasonable advice of Bishop Taylor to his Clergy—‘ Let no man preach for the praise of men. But if you meet it, instantly watch and stand upon your guard, and pray against your own vanity ; and by an express act of acknowledgment and adoration return the praise to God. Remember, that Herod was, for the omission of this, smitten by an angel ; and do thou tremble, fearing lest the judgment of God be otherwise than the sentence of the people.’ ²

Great care is needed, lest we draw a veil over the glories of our adorable Master, by selfish ends. This is indeed to lose sight of the great end of the Ministry, which is not to gain applause to ourselves, but to bring glory to God, and to win souls to Christ. In an extensive sphere for the profitable exercise of our talents (whatever they may be), how much watchfulness is needed, lest they be used for display

¹ Biographical Portraiture of Rev. J. Hinton, p. 116.

² Clergyman’s Instructor, p. 108. ‘ Let all eloquent preachers beware, lest they fill any man’s ears with sounding words, when they should be feeding his soul with the bread of everlasting life. Let them fear, lest, instead of honouring God, they honour themselves. *If any man ascend the pulpit with the intention of uttering a fine thing, he is committing a deadly sin.*’ H. K. White.

and self-exaltation—rather to commend ourselves to the regard of our people, than our message to their consciences! ‘Our business is to make men think, not of our eloquence, but of their own souls; to attend, not to our fine language, but to their own everlasting interest.’¹ Our duty is, ‘not to please but to feed;’ (as one of the old writers expressed it) ‘not to stroke the ear, but to strike the heart.’² Mr. Richmond well said—‘I have no wish to be a popular preacher in any sense but one, viz. *a preacher to the hearts of the people.*’³ Indeed the Gospel was never meant as an occasion of display, but as a treasure to dispense for the benefit of the world. And as far as we are imbued with the spirit of our office, we shall esteem the enriching of one soul with the unsearchable riches of Christ, a more durable recompence than an investiture with the dignity and honour of an earthly crown.

¹ Smith on the Sacred Office, Lect. xviii. It was a subject of bitter regret to Augustine, that his early Ministry had been distinguished by this character—‘*ut placeret, non ut doceret.*’ Jerome complained of many in his time—‘*Id habent curæ, non quomodo scripturarum medullas ebibant, sed quomodo aures populi declamatorum flosculis mulceant.*’ ‘Do not say within yourself—How much or how elegantly I can talk upon such a text: but what can I say more usefully to those who hear me, for the instruction of their minds, for the conviction of their consciences, and for the persuasion of their hearts? Let not your chief design be to work out a sheet, or to hold out an hour, but to save a soul.’—Watts’s *Humble Attempt*, pp. 19, 20.

² ‘*Pungere non palpare*’—was Jerome’s direction for the Preacher’s words. One among the evils of this selfish spirit, is the encouragement of a critical spirit among our hearers—a chief bane of the Ministry. Besides ‘this desire of appearing a fine speaker’ (as Dr. Macgill tells his young friend) ‘unfits you for attaining even that kind of excellence, which you desire. Your style, instead of presenting the just expression of thoughts and feelings suited to your objects, presents an exhibition of artificial beauties, unsuitably introduced, laboriously and affectedly portrayed; while the higher order of beauties in thought and language are neglected, or lost in the gaudy colouring, which surrounds them.’ Considerations to a Young Clergyman.

³ Richmond’s *Life*, p. 50.

Without this singleness of spirit there is no warranted expectation of success. The matter indeed is from God ; but the manner and the dress, the principle, and the exhibition, may be but ‘ incense thrown upon the altar of vanity.’¹ We may preach clearly in statement, and forcibly in manner ; but habitual defect in “ doing all ” with a single eye “ to the glory of God,” brings upon us the awful “ woe to the idol shepherd ” (his own idol, and wishing to be the idol of his people) whose ministry is blasted, and his judgment blinded.² However diligently we may be employed in his service, yet nothing is really done, done to any purpose, or with any acceptance, that is done for self—not for God. So that a pains-taking Minister, who has been engaged in the service of God for selfish ends, may at last sink into the grave with Grotius’s affecting lamentation—‘ Alas ! I have lost my life in doing nothing, with great labour.’ Or should he be used as an instrument in the work of God, it will be only as the servant, who never tastes the provision which he dispenses to his Master’s guests ; or as the physician, who heals others, but is unhealed himself.³ Godly simplicity is the alchemy, that converts every thing it touches into gold. A deficiency in talent or judgment may be compensated for, where the paramount desire is, that Christ “ in all things may have the pre-eminence ; ” and where it is the corresponding expression of the heart—“ He must increase, but I must decrease.”⁴ This indeed is the true character of the “ friends of the bridegroom ; ”⁵ to woo for him,

¹ Hall’s Sermon, p. 45.

² Zech. xi. 17.

³ It is a solemn remark of Massillon, that ‘ God sometimes, in saving his elect, makes use of instruments which he afterwards casts away.’ A thought, that may well call to mind 1 Cor. ix. 27. with deep and serious personal application !

⁴ John iii. 30.

⁵ Ibid. 29.

not for ourselves ; to seek his honour, not our own ; and to adopt an earnest tone of preaching, not as gaining more regard to ourselves, but as bringing sinners into union with their heavenly Saviour. This usefulness is quite distinct from popularity. But how poor a thing is the admiration of man, compared with this success in winning souls to Christ !¹

‘ He that intends truly to preach the Gospel and not himself ; he that is more concerned to do good to others, than to raise his own fame, or to procure a following to himself ; and that makes this the measure of all his meditations and sermons, that he may put things in the best light, and recommend them with the most advantage to his people—this man so made and so moulded, cannot miscarry in his work. He will certainly succeed to some degree. The word spoken by him shall not return again. He shall have his crown, and his reward from his labours. And to say all that can be said ; in one word, with St. Paul ; he “ shall both save himself, and them that hear him.” ’²

¹ Mr. Cotton preached an university sermon at Cambridge, much approved by those, ‘ who relished the wisdom of words more than the words of wisdom ; ’ which however, upon a clearer understanding of the true principles of the Ministry, he committed to the flames. Subsequently preaching in the same pulpit in a more Scriptural tone, his sermon was attended with the Divine blessing to one of the most eminent divines of that day—Dr. Preston. Mather’s New England, Book iii. pp. 15, 16.

² Burnet’s Pastoral Care, ch. ix.

SECTION VII.

LOVE—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

THE Christian Ministry bears upon it the grand distinctive mark of Love. It exhibits salvation flowing from the bosom of Divine mercy. It sets forth a most tender Father, a bleeding Saviour, and a faithful Comforter; so that the spirit of every discourse should be—"God is love." Thus therefore should we so cast ourselves into the mould of our commission, that we may infuse its very life and character throughout our Ministry. Paley has admirably illustrated the exquisite address of Christian love, which characterizes the Epistle to the Romans, mixing itself with the most unpalatable statements of truth, and conciliating a kind attention, as the most effectual avenue to conviction.¹

"Speaking the truth in love,"² is perhaps in few words the most complete description of our office: Some, from a false charity, would keep back offensive truth. Some again speak it in fear, from the apprehension of inconvenient consequences to themselves. Some also speak in faithfulness, as if their responsibility was simply to deliver their own souls, and not rather to win souls to Christ.

Love should pervade the whole tone of our Ministry. The cause of truth may be weakened by an inaccurate exhibition of its spirit. The Scripture marks the temper as well as the subject-matter of our Ministry. An Apostle assures us in his own case, that if he "were to speak with the tongues of men and of angels,"

¹ Horæ Paulinæ.² Eph. iv. 15.

yet without love; he would be no better than “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”¹ How delightful is it to assume the tone of endearing instruction and animated condescension, when we can look down from the pulpit, and regard the Christian part of our congregation in the tender light of “mother, and sister, and brother!” Even as it respects the unconverted, our most fruitful seasons in winning souls to Christ, are, when we are most yearning over lost sinners. This was the spirit of our Divine Pattern, and therefore that spirit, which he most “delighteth to honour.”² Besides—who does not feel the force of such a Ministry? What power does that affecting declaration carry with it—“Of whom I tell you even weeping!”³ The testimony that is borne on this particular respecting Mr. Brown of Haddington, is far more important than that of eloquence or originality. Though not deficient in the exercise of Christian sympathy, and able to endure bodily or domestic afflictions without a tear, (an unenviable exercise of self-controul, mentioned only for the sake of the contrast) yet, when warning sinners of their danger, and “beseeching them to be reconciled unto God,” he is said to have been often unable to restrain his emotions.⁴

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

² Matt. ix. 36. Luke xix. 41, 42. with Deut. v. 29. Psalm lxxxi. 13. Ezek. xviii. 31. Hos. xi. 7—9. Comp. Bowles, Lib. i. c. 21.

³ Phil. iii. 18. ‘Oh! how deep into the heart go those periods, that are sown in the unforced, uninvited tears of the preacher,’—Robinson on Claude. Calvin writes excellently on this point—‘Sunt multi clamosi reprehensores, qui in vitia declamitando, vel potius fulminando, mirum zeli ardorem præ se ferunt; interea securo sunt animo, ut videantur per lusum guttur et latera exercere velle. At pii pastoris est, flere secum, priusquam alios ad fletum provocet; tacita cogitatione discrucari, priusquam indignationis signa edat; et plus retinere apud se doloris, quam aliis faciat.’ In 2 Cor. ii. 4.

⁴ Brown’s Life, p. 22. Mr Winter tell us of his friend Mr.

It would add considerably to effect, if this spirit be *suffered to express itself in corresponding tenderness of appellation*. The Apostles were used to address their people with language, expressive of the most tender endearment.¹ The extant Epistles of the Primitive Fathers, the popular discourses of Cyprian and Augustine, and the Homilies of Chrysostom, are strongly imbued with this character. The amiable Fenelon observes—‘ I would have every Minister of the Gospel address his audience with the zeal of a friend, with the generous energy of a father, *and with the exuberant affection of a mother.*’ It is obvious indeed, that this language requires the controul of chaste sobriety; but the sober expression of heartfelt tenderness would strike many a chord of sympathy, interest, and reciprocal feeling, and would bring us into affectionate contact with the objects of our instruction. Much may also be effected by bringing before them from time to time, our remembrance of them in our prayers and thanksgivings,² our tender interest in their welfare,³ our devotedness to their service,⁴ our ardent longing for their Christian advancement,⁵ and the strong connexion of their pros-

Whitfield—‘ I hardly knew him to go through a sermon without weeping more or less; and I truly believe his were the tears of sincerity. I have heard him say in the pulpit—‘ You blame me for weeping; but how can I help it, when you will not weep for yourselves, though your immortal souls are upon the verge of destruction; and for aught you know, you are hearing your last sermon, and may never more have an opportunity to have Christ offered to you ’—Jay’s Life of Winter, pp. 27, 28. The outward expression of love may greatly vary from constitutional causes; nor would we insist upon tears, as a necessary evidence of a tender heart. But the spirit in the cases referred to was warranted by the strongest evidence to be genuine and fervent love to souls, and is well worthy of our imitation.

¹ Comp. Phil. iv. 1—and the Apostolic greetings of St. Paul’s Epistles, with the Epistles of his brethren throughout.

² Comp. Rom. i. 9. 1 Cor. i. 4. Eph. i. 6. Phil. i. 3, 4, &c.

³ 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. ⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 15. ⁵ Phil. i. 8—11.

perity with our own happiness.¹ Such a spirit will contribute much to cement the bond between us, and to maintain a beneficial influence over their hearts.

This *spirit of love must deeply imbue* the language of reproof. We are commanded to “exhort,” but it is “with all long-suffering;”² bearing with the frowardness, that will often resist the most affectionate language of exhortation. Meekness, gentleness, and patience are to be the characteristics of our instruction, when addressing the opponents of the Gospel.³ The wounds must be made upon their consciences as sinners, not upon their feelings as men. All unnecessary excitement of enmity must be carefully avoided, and the faithfulness that lays open their sins, must, as far as in us lies, be shown to be “the wounds of a friend.”⁴ Tenderness, and demonstrations of love, without weakening the application of reproof, have great power in softening the heart to receive it: so that it falls, as “a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.”⁵

But especially must this spirit be cultivated, in *delivering the solemn denunciations of the Gospel*, lest we mingle strange fire with the holy flame from the altar of God. Some Ministers seem to combine human passion with their zeal, and to speak of the wrath of God, as if they were giving vent to their own indignation. How different this spirit from the persuasive rule of the Apostolic Ministry,⁶ and from the tenderness of our Divine Master, who breaks off from his most awful strain of denunciation, as if unable any

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 8. ² John 4. ³ John 4.

² 2 Tim. iv. 2.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. Circumliniatur modo poculum cœlestis sapientiæ melle, ut possint ab imprudentibus amara remedia sine offensione potari; dum illiciens prima dulcedo acerbiteratam soporis asperi sub prætextu suavitatis occultat. Lactant.

⁴ Prov. xxvii. 6.

⁵ Ib. xxv. 12.

⁶ 2 Cor. v. 11. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 2.

longer to suppress the yearnings of his compassion¹—giving vent to his feelings in these tender expressions—“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!”

The idea of a judge compelled to pronounce the sentence of condemnation upon his own beloved son, might illustrate the combined solemnity and affection, with which the Minister of Christ ought ever to speak of “that place, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” To forbear to speak of it from a scrupulous sensitiveness of feeling, is an act of positive unfaithfulness to God, to our own conscience, and to our people.² To make it the prominent characteristic of our Ministry, is to disguise the Gospel of love “with a covering not of God’s Spirit.” To speak of it in any other tone than that of *tender seriousness*, is to expose ourselves to our Master’s rebuke, when his disciples would have called down fire from heaven—“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”³ Trembling, faltering lips rather become us, as guilty sinners speaking to our fellow-men not more guilty than ourselves. It is this frame of mind alone, that will give power to our message in the hearts of persons “dead in trespasses and sins.” A bold, unfeeling fidelity—setting at defiance all the sympathies of our nature—is (as we have hinted) most uncongenial with our Master’s spirit, brings no honour upon the Gospel, and produces little or no effect upon our people. On the other hand, a tender spirit, instead of excluding these solemn parts of our message, enables us to introduce them most effectively. For while a severe mode or tone of address is often attributed to ill-temper or resentment, even those, who are indisposed to follow

¹ Matt. xxiii. 23—37.

² Is not the latter clause in Mark xvi. 16. as component a part of the Ministerial commission as the former?

³ Luke ix. 55.

our instructions, will listen to them with patience, and often with complacency, when laid before them in the spirit of love.

We are not arguing for that sensitive delicacy, which, when the patient shrinks, touches no more. But we know not why the most energetic tone of faithfulness should not be blended with meekness and love; and we must conceive, that a tender and affectionate mode of treatment is best adapted to the exigency of the case. The brute creation may be driven: but rational creatures require to be drawn. The only force that is likely to act with power is the compulsion of love.¹ Indeed the oratory of the Christian Ministry clearly illustrates the maxims of the beathen sophists, who insisted upon kindness in an orator as indispensable to his success.² For none will open their hearts to the preacher, except the tone of his instructions has impressed them with a sincere conviction of his love to their best interests.³ Love is the life, power, soul, and spirit of pulpit eloquence; entreating rather than denouncing is the character

¹ I have always been afraid' (said a late excellent young Minister) 'of driving my people away from the Saviour. I would rather err on the side of drawing them.' *Memoirs of Rev. John Escreet*, by Rev. T. Webster, p. 50.

² The moral of the fabled tradition of Amphion by his music drawing stones after him for the walls of Thebes, and of Orpheus taming wild beasts by his harp, alluded probably to the extraordinary power, which they were enabled to exercise over insensible and unyielding hearts. *Ευνοια*. Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. Homer introduces his hoary Nestor pleading in this insinuating spirit—*εὐφρονας*. *Iliad*, lib. ii. 78.

³ 'Qui dicendo nititur persuadere quod bonum est, nihil horum trium spernat, ut scilicet doceat, delectet, flectat; ita enim audietur intelligenter, libenter, obedienter.'—Augustine De Doctr. Christian. iv. 12, 17, 26. 'These three steps in this progress are intimately connected. We should speak so, as in the first place, to instruct and be understood; in the second, to please, so far at least as to attract and fix attention; in the third, to gain and conquer.' Campbell on Past. Char. p. 87.

of our office ;¹ and it is when we deliver our Master's message with the looks and language of his own manifested tenderness, that we attract, delight, and triumph over the hearts of a willing people. We wonder not at the success of the Ministry of St. Paul, when we read, that at Ephesus (which doubtless was an instance of the general course of his Ministry) he "ceased not for three years to warn every *one of them night and day with tears.*"² The most honoured Ministers have not been those who have been distinguished for the brightest talents, but men of a humble and affectionate spirit. Some eminent servants of God, from the want of this spirit of the Gospel, alarm rather than persuade ; confirm prejudice rather than remove it ; and consequently in the effectiveness of their Ministrations fall below many of their brethren, of far inferior gifts. Though however every Christian pastor may not be equally successful in gaining upon the affections of his people, yet if we believe that Christ loves us, we should each one prove our tender love to his flock. Menelaus was pronounced to 'bring nothing worthy of the priesthood, because he had the fury of a cruel tyrant, and the rage of a savage beast ;'³ thus illustrating by the force of contrast, the spirit of the priesthood to be that of gentleness and love ; and intimating, that the defect of this spirit will paralyze the acceptance and consequent efficiency of our Ministrations. Fletcher remarked despondingly with regard to himself, but most truly with regard to the Ministry, that 'love, continual, universal, ardent love was the *soul of all the labour of a Minister.*'⁴ This influence gives a tender expression to Ministerial earnestness, well calculated to operate with winning

¹ See 2 Cor. v. 20.

² Acts xx. 31.

³ Maccab. iv. 25.

⁴ Coxe's Life of Fletcher, p. 21.

constraint upon repulsive minds, and ‘to bring our people to God, and to keep them continually near to him.’ This Dr. Doddridge judged to be the grand purpose of the Ministry ; but found, as he complained, that it was, ‘to him at least, a very hard thing.’¹

¹ Orton’s Life of Doddridge, ch. v.

PART V.

**THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN
MINISTRY.**



PART V.

THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

LET us not think, that all our work is done in the study and in the pulpit. Preaching is indeed the grand momentum of Divine agency; but it derives much of its power from connexion with the pastoral work; and its too frequent disjunction from it, must be considered as a main cause of Ministerial inefficiency.¹ The Pastor and Preacher combine to form the completeness of the sacred office, as expounded in our Ordination service, and implied in scriptural illustrations. How little can a stated appearance in public answer to the lowest sense of such terms as Shepherd, Watchman, Overseer, Steward!—terms, which import not a mere general superintendence over the flock, charge, or household, but an acquaintance with their individual wants, and a dis-

¹ Thus Dr. Doddridge remarked—' My heart does not upbraid me with having kept back any thing that may be profitable to my people. But I fear, I have not followed them sufficiently with domestic and personal exhortations.'—Orton's Life, ch. ii. Bishop Wilson recommended his Clergy to ' visit every family and soul in his parish at least once a year, that *we may all of us* ' (said he, alluding probably to Heb. xiii. 17.) ' *be able to give a comfortable account of our labour to our Great Master.*' Stowel's Life, p. 114. Baxter's Reformed Pastor may be generally referred to, as placing this important Ministry upon its high ground of obligation, urging the strongest motives, answering the chief objections, and suggesting most admirable directions for the work.

tribution suitable to the occasion: without which, instead of "taking heed to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers," we can scarcely be said to "take the oversight of it" at all.

We shall enter into some details of this most interesting subject.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PASTORAL WORK.

THE Pastoral work is the personal application of the pulpit Ministry to the proper individualities of our people—looking upon them severally, as having a distinct and separate claim upon our attention, cares, and anxiety; urging each of them, as far as possible, to the concerns of eternity; and commending to their hearts a suitable exhibition and offer of salvation. For this purpose we must acquaint ourselves with their situation, habits, character, state of heart, peculiar wants, and difficulties, that we may "give to each of them a portion in due season." The Pastor unites in himself the offices of Watchman and Evangelist. He "*watches for souls*," "lest a root of bitterness should spring up" to the trouble and defilement of the church—lest unchristian tempers and practices should mar the Christian profession—lest a lukewarm spirit should paralyze Christian exertion, or a spirit of contention hinder Christian love. All need his superintendence. The indolent are slumbering—the self-dependent are falling back—the zealous are under the influence of spiritual pride—the earnest are becoming self-righteous—the regular, formal.

Then there is the inquirer, asking for direction—the tempted and perplexed, looking for support—the afflicted longing for the cheering consolation of the Gospel—the convinced sinner, from the slight healing of his wound,¹ settling in a delusive peace—the professor, “having a name that he lives; but he is dead.” These are cases, that cannot, in all their minute and diversified forms, be fully treated in the pulpit. It is therefore in his Pastoral character, that the Christian Minister “watches for souls, as one that must give account.”² But he “watches also *in all things.*” There *are seasons* peculiarly suited for specific instruction, or for the enforcement of particular duties—special opportunities for conviction, or consolation (such as providential visitations in families, or in individuals, attended with awakening or softening impression)—seasons, that should find the Minister “doing the work of an Evangelist,”³ in the instant and suitable improvement of them; and which, without the constant oversight of our people, would be neglected and lost.

Not pretending to lay down a complete scheme of the Pastoral work, we shall illustrate its general principles by slight sketches of detail. In order that plans may be useful, they must be suitable to their intended sphere—not only really, but relatively, good—formed by the character, circumstances, and habits of the people: as they are scattered or congregated, educated or illiterate, or a mixture of both—according to their state of ignorance or knowledge—whether the ground has been previously cultivated, or neglected—whether it has been occupied by Dissenters, or left wholly waste—whether the disposition

¹ Jer. vi. 14.² Heb. xiii. 17.³ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

of the people is prepared for the Gospel or opposed to it. These and many other considerations, though they would not alter the system of our Ministry, yet would materially influence the moulding of the several parts to a more close and definite adaptation.

The importance of this system is evident from the nature of the case. The husbandman does not rest when he has committed his seed to the earth. He watches its growth with daily and most anxious inspection, and devotes himself with incessant labour to its preservation from impending dangers, until he has safely gathered the fruit of his toil. And is not the word the imperishable seed? Are not our people the field of God? Are not we the husbandmen, to sow the seed, and instrumentally to gather the harvest? And are our fields more secure from injury, or in less need of constant and anxious superintendence? ¹ Every other illustration of our work illustrates the same point. As physicians, how can we prepare the proper medicines, without a knowledge of the individual disease? As stewards, how can we make our distribution, if unacquainted with the respective objects of our attention? As nursing-mothers, how ineffect-ive our care and tenderness, if it be not regulated according to the known strength or weakness of our people.

We cannot but advert to the necessity of a systematic adherence to this Ministry. If it be left to the humour or convenience of the moment, procrastination, indolence, and worldly interruptions, will incessantly hinder its operation. Fixed days and hours (portioned with a due regard to all other Ministerial claims) should be devoted to it with the same con-

¹ Zepperi Ars. Concion. Lib. iv.

scientific determination as to pulpit preparation. Our visits should embrace as large a scope of solid instruction as time and opportunity may allow; and we should enter into the spirit of the system with lively and tender interest. An affectionate attention to the young forms a prominent part of this superintendence, both from their connexion with the present encouragement and future prospects of the Ministry, and from the successful avenues which are thus opened to the hearts of parents. To win, therefore, their confidence, by frequent communication and by habits of kindness, will open, with little additional labour, a promise of an abundant harvest. It may sometimes be necessary, in this Ministry, to avail ourselves of the most correct sources of information relative to our people; ¹ though much discretion is required, to avoid the evils of jealousy and suspicion, and to apply to the best use the materials thus furnished to our hand.

We may further remark, that this system is also most strongly inculcated from the highest authority. "*Searching and seeking out the sheep,*" is marked by the Great Shepherd, as the difference between himself and hirelings; against whom the neglect of this pastoral care formed a main article of indictment.² Indeed his own Ministry was of this character. With his disciples, it was that of the Good Shepherd, who "callesh his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."³ With the world, it was the constant wakefulness to improve every opportunity, as well of private as of public and general instruction.⁴ The Ministry of his Apostles was framed after the same pattern.⁵ During the three years, that the great Apostle was the resident Pastor

¹ See 1 Cor. i. 11. Phil. ii. 19. 1 Thess. iii. 1—5. 3 John 3.

² Ezek. xxxiv. 6, 8. with 4, 11.

³ John x. 3.

⁴ Comp. Luke xiv.

⁵ Acts v. 42.

of a church, he combined pastoral with public instruction.¹ “He ceased not to warn every one of them night and day with tears;” and the testimony of his conscience on this particular, seems to have been his rejoicing under the overwhelming pressure of Ministerial responsibility.² Indeed his intimate knowledge of the spiritual state of a vast number of individuals in the churches is evident, from the relative appropriateness of his instructions, given in the exact line of exhortation, reproof, or encouragement, to which he knew the personal distinctness of their experience would instantly respond. His readiness in “changing his voice”³ to his people, could have been the result only of an accurate and diligent inspection of their state.

The documents of the early ages furnish abundant testimony to the Pastoral work, as a constituent part of the primitive Ministry. Ignatius is said to have known almost every individual in his flock.⁴ Cyprian frequently gives us his judgment and practice on this subject.⁵ Gregory wrote a serious treatise on this

¹ Publicly and from house to house, Acts xx. 20.—‘as if he perceived that his public doctrine would vanish into air, except it were assisted by private admonition and conference.’—Bowles, lib. ii. c. 6. See Calvin, Grotius, Hammond, in loco, Beza on Acts v. 42. and Secker’s Charges, p. 246. Comp. also the Apostle’s Ministry at Colosse and Thessalonica, Col. i. 28, 29. 1 Thess. ii. 11, 12. ‘If false teachers “creep into houses,” for the purposes of seduction from the truth, (2 Tim. iii. 6.) should not the orthodox pastors show at least equal diligence?’—Bowles, ib.

² Col. i. 3, 6. with 26, 27.

³ Gal. iv. 20.

⁴ He gives a useful parochial hint—not to forget servants in our ministrations. Epist. ad Polycarp. No class of our people are generally more removed from our sphere of instruction. Plans, however, have been devised of assembling them on the Sabbath, with the consent of their employers, and with encouraging success. Where time and physical strength allow, the word of God, read with them in an expository and catechetical mode, would form a most important system of scriptural instruction.

⁵ Quid est enim major aut melior curâ præpositorum, quam diligentî sollicitudine et medelâ salubri fovendis et conservandis ovibus providere; cum Dominus loquatur et dicat —Ezek. xxxiv. 4.

department of the Ministry. At a later period of the Church, Ostervald expresses his surprise, that a Christian Minister can satisfy his conscience, without a diligent parochial Ministration.¹ The questions and exhortations in our own Ordination services are evidently formed upon this model.² The episcopal instructions of Taylor, Hort, Burnet, Leighton, Secker, and Wilson,³ (not to mention other names of more recent date) have solemnly charged it upon our consciences. The obligation of our Ordination vow—to “take heed to *all the* flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers”⁴—evidently implies (as Baxter observes) that ‘each individual member of our charge must be taken heed of, and watched over by us in our Ministry. To which end it is supposed necessary, that (unless where *absolute necessity forbiddeth it*, through the scarcity of Pastors, and greatness of the flock) we should know every person that belongeth to our charge.’ ‘I confess

Cum ergo pastoribus talibus, per quos Dominicæ oves negligentur et pereunt—si Dominus comminatur—quid nos aliud facere oportet, frater carissime, quam colligendi et revocandi Christi ovibus exhibere diligentiam plenam? Cyp. Epist. lxxviii.

¹ See his Lectures on the Sacred Office, pp. 242—245.

² See Comber on the Ordination of Priests, and Secker’s Charges, pp. 192, 193. Burnet remarks on the question respecting the use of private as well as public admonition—to the whole, as well as to the sick—‘This is as plainly personal and constant, as words can make any thing; and in this is expressed the so much neglected, but so necessary duty, which incumbents owe their flock—in a private way, visiting, instructing, and admonishing them, which is one of the most useful and important parts of their duty.’—*Past. Care*, ch. vi. See also Stowell’s Life of Bishop Wilson, p. 133.

³ Clergyman’s Instructor, pp. 109, 110, 365. Burnet’s *Past. Care*, ch. viii. Secker’s Charges, p. 25, 229, 245. Leighton’s Works, ii. 445, 447. Often would Leighton commiserate the London Clergy, whom the extent of their cures disabled from individual attention to their flock. ‘Were I again’ (said he in his last retirement) ‘to be a parish Minister, I must follow sinners to their homes, and even to their alehouses.’ *Life*, lv. lvi.

⁴ Acts xx. 28.

(says Bishop Burnet), ‘that this way of parochial visitation is an increase of labour; but that will seem no hard matter to such, as have a right sense of their Ordination vows, of the value of souls, and of the dignity of their function. If men had the spirit of their calling in them, and a due measure of flame and heat in carrying it on, labour in it would be rather a pleasure than a trouble.’¹

Calvin often lays down the Scriptural obligation to this work, and reports the fruitful harvests reaped at Geneva, when the Ministers and elders went from house to house, and dealt closely and individually with the consciences of the people. When Baxter first came to Kidderminster, scarcely a family was known to worship God in their house: when he left it, but few families were living without this daily acknowledgment of God, or were unwilling to submit to his private catechisings and personal conference. Six hundred communicants attended the Lord’s table.² Alleine (as one of his biographers informs us) ‘often did bless God for the great success he had in these exercises, saying, that God had made him as instrumental of good to souls this way, as by his public preaching, if not more.’ Cotton Mather, while ‘he looked upon this work as laborious as any in all his Ministry,’ yet ‘set a great value upon his Pastoral visits. He not only did, but got good in his conversations with all sorts of persons, and thought he never walked more in the Spirit, than thus walking to his flock, to serve and seek their best interest.’³

¹ Pastoral Care, ch. viii.

² See Calamy’s Account—‘I never knew Ministers’ (as Baxter remarks, speaking of Alleine’s parochial diligence) ‘who *prudently and diligently* took that course, to be unprosperous in their work: but by them, that have wisely and faithfully used it, I have known that done, that before seemed incredible.’

³ See his Life, p. 37, and his *Essays to do Good*. See also the Life of Pliny Fisk, pp. 31, 32. Dr. Doddridge’s exercises on this

The *uses of this Pastoral system to ourselves* are of the highest moment. In the improvement of this intercourse with our people, it might almost be said, that we receive as much as we impart. Teachers must be constant learners; and much is learned consciously or unconsciously by this system. It is indeed at once the seal to the testimony of the preceding Sabbath, and the treasure-house, from which the most valuable materials are furnished for our ensuing Ministrations.¹ We have before noticed cases of observation during the week, as often suggesting both the subjects and the matter for the pulpit.² And perhaps there is no better way of filling

subject, on his return from an ordination, are most deeply interesting—‘I have many cares and labours: may God forgive me, that I am so apt to forget those of the pastoral office. I now resolve, 1. To take a more particular account of the souls committed to my care. 2. To visit, as soon as possible, the whole congregation, to learn more particularly the circumstances of them, their children, and servants. 3. Will make as exact a list as I can of those that I have reason to believe are unconverted, awakened, converted, fit for communion, or already in it. 4. When I hear any thing particular, relating to the religious state of my people, I will visit them, and talk with them. 5. I will especially be careful to visit the sick. I will begin immediately with inspection over those under my own roof, that I may with the greater freedom urge other families to the like care. O my soul, thy account is great: it is high time that it be got into better order. Lord, I hope thou knowest, I am desirous of approving myself a faithful servant of thee and of souls. O watch over me, that I may watch over them; and then all will be well.’ Orton’s Life, ch. v.

¹ ‘Acquaint yourselves (was the excellent advice of Matthew Henry) ‘with the state of your people’s souls—their temptations—their infirmities. *You will then know the better how to preach to them.*’ Life, p. 124. ‘Rely on it, he who hopes to discharge the duties of the pulpit ably, appropriately, seasonably, and to the greatest advantage of his flock, *without being much with them*, entertains a hope, which is perfectly unreasonable, and will certainly be disappointed.’ Professor Miller’s Letters. The parcelling out of our country into parishes under their several Ministers, obviously tends to facilitate this pastoral system. So fully sensible was Philip Henry of this—“that he often wished and prayed for the opening of a door, by which to return to that order again.” Life, pp. 47, 48.

² See p. 259.

up subjects of interesting self-application, than an attempt in our pastoral course to draw them out familiarly in contact with those individual cases, to which, in common with our own, they might be adapted. The sermons thus made in our parishes are of a very different character from those that are thought out or collected in the study. If they are less abstract, they are more pointed and experimental. We are enabled to mark the precise evil requiring caution, the deficiency calling for exhortation, the circumstances needing advice, the distress or perplexity looking for consolation and encouragement: and thus the domestic preaching of the week becomes a most useful auxiliary to our pulpit Ministry; the style of which from its distinct reference to specific cases, acquires a sort of locality, far more interesting in its character, and more close in its application.

Medical skill is gained much more by practical experience, than by any system of abstract study even of standard works. Whatever value therefore belongs to an accurate and well-directed course of reading, (and the Writer will not be suspected of depreciating its value¹), yet he is persuaded, that the study of the human heart—of our own hearts most especially—is far more important.² Without that experience,

¹ See Part I. Chap. vii. Sect. I.

² An old divine used to say, that a preacher had three books to study—the Bible, himself, and the people. Gillies' Hist. Coll. Bishop Burnet remarks it as 'the capital error in men's preparing themselves for the sacred Ministry, that they study books more than themselves.'—History of his own Times. 'While a Minister is engaged in composing and preaching, he is giving out to others; but whilst he is occupied in familiar conferences, he is taking in for himself. One half hour's practical study of the human heart in personal visits, gives an impulse to ten hours' speculative meditation from men and authors.' D. Wilson's Essay on Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. xliii. 'I was fond enough of books' (said Halyburton, on his death-bed) 'but what the Lord let me see of my evil heart, and what was necessary against it, was more

which can be obtained only in pastoral practice, our statements, though solid and valuable in themselves, and connected in their system, will be inapplicable, and proportionably ineffective; like a medical practitioner dealing out warranted medicines promiscuously to his patients, with little prospect of material benefit.

Nor is this *system less important to our people*. Every parochial Minister is conversant with the fact, how very little our pulpit discourses are comprehended, retained, or applied by the poor. There is a sort of mental deafness among the mass; so that, except the word is brought to them in the smallest parcels, and with the most direct application, the sound only is heard, while the meaning is never fixed upon the mind with an intelligent or permanent apprehension.

The preservation of our people from schism, and the maintenance of Christian unity among them, is one of the many blessings resulting from this system. The converts of preaching, if left to themselves, and destitute of this fostering superintendence, become like "children tossed too and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." If the fold be tended only on the Sabbath, we must not wonder if sectarianism makes progress—if "grievous wolves enter in among them, not sparing the flock"—or if even "among the flock should arise men, speaking per-

useful to me in the course of my Ministry than all my books. This is the best pulpit I was ever in. I presume, in the case I am now in, (on his death-bed,) to suggest this advice: that it may not only be your care to be diligent in composing sermons; but above all, examine your own hearts; and make use of what discoveries you get there, to enable you to dive into consciences, to awaken hypocrites, to separate the precious from the vile, and to do it with that accuracy and caution, as not to make sad the hearts of those, whom God has made glad. This is the great point in religion, and in the management of your Ministry, that you may obtain the testimony of the great Shepherd, when he shall appear.' Halyburton's Memoirs.

verse things, to draw away disciples after them.”¹—The tendency of Evangelical preaching (as distinguished from moral ethics, or cold orthodoxy) is to excite a spirit of inquiry and interest; which, important as it is, if it be not carefully directed and controled, lays our flock more open than before, to “the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”² Vast indeed is the responsibility of what Hooker calls—‘the greatest blot or blemish of notable ignorance—unconscionable absence from the cures, whereof men have taken the charge.’³ The want of the influence of example, and of seasonable counsel, encouragement, and reproof, is a serious loss to the Ministry. Yet we are persuaded, that the mere residence, and even the faithful preaching, of the servant of Christ, without his watchful fatherly care, will be comparatively of little avail. Erroneous doctrines or practices will take root before he is aware of their existence. We cannot blame the Apostle (entrusted as he was with an universal commission) for not fixing himself as the stated Pastor of the Galatian Church. Yet the consciousness of the evils of his non-residence (in the ascendancy of the Judaizing teachers) led him to express his earnest “desire

¹ This danger is expressly marked as an incentive to pastoral care, Acts xx. 29, 30. with 28.

Nunquam, custodibus illis,
Nocturnam stabulis furem, incursusque luporum,
Aut impacatos a tergo horrebis Iberos.—Virg. Georg. liii. 406.

² Eph. iv. 14.

³ Book v. 81. Quesnel, in his sketches of the Minister's Character, marks the following—‘To love residence—to absent himself but little, and that out of necessity—never to be absent in heart—to return to his flock as soon as possible—to try all means of surmounting the obstacles which keep him from it—and to look upon non-residence as the most grateful thing imaginable to Satan, and which he promotes with all his power, as a source of the perdition of souls.’ On 1 Thess. ii. 17, 18.

to be present with them ; ” as if his personal inspection would be more useful than his letters could be.¹ Thus the prevention or cure of evils will be found, under the blessing of God, in the exertions of a Pastor, steadily devoting himself to his people, cementing the bond of union and confidence between them “ by the mutual faith both of him and them ; ”² they looking unto him as their affectionate Minister, and he living for them as his beloved charge.

This leads to another advantage of this system—*the gaining the confidence and affection of our people.* To win their hearts, is often the most successful way to win their souls. Yet, if they must know in order to love us, the Pastor must live among them as their friend, in the interchange of those kindly offices, which (as Bishop Gibson admirably observed) ‘ are the means of endearing Ministers to their people, and of opening a passage into their hearts for spiritual instruction of all sorts.’³ It was thus, that the Missionary Eliot ‘ was indeed ’ (as his Biographer tells us) ‘ the father of his people. By holding frequent intercourse with them, he greatly endeared himself to them, and became acquainted with the extent of their knowledge of Divine things, with their trials and difficulties, with their joys and sorrows. He was in this manner enabled to act as their instructor, counsellor, and comforter.’⁴ A congregation thus

¹ See Gal. iv. 19, 20.

² Rom. i. 12.

³ Clerg. Instructor, p. 325.

⁴ See his Life. ‘ I am too backward (said the celebrated John Rogers of Dedham) ‘ to private visiting of neighbours at their houses, which neglect is very injurious ; for from this cause their love to me cannot be so great as it would be, nor am I so well acquainted with their particular states, and therefore cannot speak so fitly to them as I might.’ Archbishop Secker remarks—‘ A chief reason why we have so little hold upon our people is, that we converse with them so little as watchmen over their souls.’ After alluding to the influence, which the foreign Protestant

used to see their Minister in private, is like a family listening to a father's instruction. When, after the example of our Great High Priest, we are "touched with the feeling of their infirmities," and tenderly enter into the details of their several trials, a mutual sympathy is excited of the highest moment. Their confidence is encouraged; and they readily apply for more personal counsel and consolation than can be given from the pulpit; and thus they bring to us their cases, doubts, and perplexities, that we may make them our own. Indeed how else can we mould our Ministerial counsel in the endearing form of brotherly sympathy, so as to be ready to say—"Who is weak, and I am not weak?"¹ In what other way can we ascertain the real state of religion among us, its progress or decline, the drawbacks, or the means of advancement, or the besetting temptations of our people, so as to provide them "with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left?"

The *character of this pastoral intercourse* may be defined to be a conciliating, close, affectionate, and spiritual contact with our people, combining the dignity with the condescension and humility of our office—as "the messengers of the Lord of Hosts;" and yet "their servants for Jesus' sake."² This

pastors, the Romish priests, and the Dissenters gain over their people by this means, he adds,—'Why should not we learn from them?'—Charges, pp. 246, 247. Mr. Hall observes—'The more frequently the pastor converses with his people, provided his conversation be properly conducted, the more will his person be endeared, and his Ministry acceptable.'—Sermon, p. 29. For this purpose Bishop Wilson, (Stowell's Life, p. 114, 143. Dr. Doddridge, (Life, ch. v.) Sir James Stonehouse, (see his Letters to a young Minister,) Ostervald, Dr. Stearne, (Clerg. Inst. p. 384.) and Dr. Watts, (Humble Address, p. 91) recommend a Ministerial register, to note, as may be practicable, their individualities of character and circumstances.

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 29.

² Mal. ii. 7. with 2 Cor. iv. 5.

character will at once invite confidence, and repress familiarity. We may thus, without sinking our dignity, clothe it in the garb of a friend; entering (not with prying curiosity, but with kindly interest) into their circumstances of family difficulty, their temporal wants, habits of living, and connexions (if among the poor) with their masters and neighbours. Prudent advice may here be given to the heads of families on the management of their expences, the education and the government of their children, family worship and instruction, and whatever else makes up their little world.¹ Suitable admonition may be grafted upon these particulars, such as could not enter into our pulpit Ministrations with sufficient distinctness for practical utility.

Social visits to our people for the purpose of spreading a general Christian atmosphere around them, may be considered a highly important part of the Pastoral work. What Dr. Watts aptly calls "parlour preaching"²—that is, the ability to introduce the subject of religion seasonably and acceptably into social intercourse is one of the most valuable talents to the Church of God. It may indeed be in part a natural gift, yet it is capable, even under most unfavourable circumstances, of unlimited improvement; and they who have attained the highest excellence in this way, are not those, who were most richly endowed by nature, but those, who have "stirred up this gift of God that is in them" with the most assiduous diligence. We should not indeed recommend the introduction of religion as an official task; much less in that sententious and

¹ George Herbert, speaking of parochial inquiries into the spiritual economy of the house, decides—'If the parson were ashamed of particularizing in these things, he *were not fit to be a parson.*' Ch. xiv.

² Humble Attempt, pp. 90, 91.

authoritative tone, which carries with it the air of solemn affectation. The habit of general cheerfulness may suitably blend with the subject, taking care not to divert from the main object, so as to preclude a natural and graceful return : and remembering that seriousness is essential to unction, as unction is to edification. Nor do we suppose, that the same mode of introduction is adapted to all circumstances, or that we must always open the subject with a formal or abrupt commencement. If no direct method offers itself, some incident or topic of conversation will often, by an intelligent readiness of address, and by the expression of a glowing heart, be turned to good account. Where the obligation is deeply felt, opportunities generally will be found, or a wakeful spirit of love will make them ; and if the character of the preacher is put off, the character of the man of God will be maintained in close, affectionate, vigorous conversation upon matters of eternal moment.

An adaptation of topics is however necessary to give effect to the exercise of this talent. Subjects of instruction may be drawn from matters of general interest. In mixed society, two or more real Christians, interchanging their sentiments on any interesting topic, will furnish a vehicle of important communication with the rest. The difficulties are indeed considerably increased in our intercourse with the higher classes (should such there be) in our parishes. Yet much here may be accomplished by the introduction of truth "in the meekness of wisdom ;" and the Christian Minister never appears in greater dignity, or speaks with greater effectiveness to the rich ; than when his mild decision of heavenly character exhibits the determination to obey God rather than man," and to

honour the authority of his commission with pre-eminent regard. It must not be forgotten, that the spiritual care of the rich is a weighty part of our Ministerial burden, for which a strict personal account will be demanded; with an eye to which, we must wisely and diligently search out the avenues for the conveyance of the most enduring treasures to their souls.

It will be well for us to be prepared for the great difficulty, that will be often found in the improvement of these opportunities. A store of materials (such as may be drawn from an acquaintance with the best practical writers or from Christian biography) will prove of essential service for the conducting of conversation in an edifying manner. A short time for recollection, for the most suitable disposition of the topics, for the study of proper variety, and above all, for exercising our dependence upon Almighty aid, may be of the utmost moment. In this spirit of consideration, diligence, and faith, we may expect the feeblest effort to be crowned with an abundant and everlasting blessing; while the best-ordered conversation, in our own spirit, will prove ineffectual for the desired ends.

Associations of the promising young females of the higher or middle rank in our parishes are very desirable. A monthly afternoon or evening thus employed at the parsonage for the express purpose of working for the poor, or for some other definite object, has been found an important opportunity of drawing together young persons within the sphere of the parochial Ministry, to whom otherwise it is difficult to gain access. The exclusion of unprofitable conversation is easily secured by the introduction of a suitable book; while at the same time subjects of

more distinct application may be interspered with important effect.

We may also remark on this subject our Lord's example in combining kindness to the body with love to the soul. We are often reminded in our Pastoral employ, that "a man's gift maketh room for him."¹ Our instructions are never so weighty, as when they are connected with the habit or exercise of Christian sympathy; and thus our means combine with our labours for the promotion of the most important objects. In many cases, however, this system would give most baneful encouragement to a false profession. Until therefore the character is well ascertained, it is far better to disjoin than to unite the exercises of temporal and spiritual charity. And indeed in all cases, much discretion is needed to discriminate the objects, seasons, and measure of assistance; without which, well-intentioned charity will be one of the greatest evils. The system of our charity must be regulated by personal means, calculated in the spirit of prudence and *self-denial*, and applied to the relief of want—not (except in cases of sickness) to the procurement of indulgence. Its scriptural extent thus regulated, is universal, with however a special regard "to the household of faith."² Next to them, those who combine respectability with distress will follow, according to their gradations of character and want. As a general rule, the lifting them out of the gulf of despondency by partial assistance (thus, by making them co-operators with ourselves, giving a stimulus to their own exertions) is more efficient as well as more œconomical, than a complete deliverance from their difficulties.³ The importance of accom-

¹ Prov. xviii. 16.

² Gal. vi. 10.

³ Mr. Thomas Gouge (a non-conformist Divine of considerable

panying spiritual counsel with temporal relief is obvious. A tract might sometimes be given, where personal conversation had not been found practicable or seasonable.

We must not however lose the character of the Minister in this conciliating attire, nor dismiss our parochial visitation without some more or less direct message from God. Some plain and pointed inquiries, directing a suitable application of the message to individual consciences, are most desirable. Thus Cotton Mather would often leave some awful questions with his people—as—‘What have I been doing ever since I came into the world, about the great errand, upon which God sent me into the world? If God should now call me out of the world, what would become of me throughout eternal ages? Have I ever yet by faith carried a perishing soul unto the Lord Jesus for both righteousness and salvation?’¹ If we cannot grapple thus closely with their consciences; yet the value of the soul; the evil of sin; the love of the Saviour; the study of the word; the influences of the Spirit; the privilege of secret, family, and public prayer; the importance of personal and family religion; and its

estate and large charity) used to employ the poor at his own charge, furnishing them with the materials, and giving them the full profit of their work. By this means he indulged the flow of his own charity with the best encouragement to honest industry. *Clark's Lives*, vol. iii. p. 203. Clothing, rent, or shoe Societies (adding a certain ratio to the weekly contributions of the poor) have materially contributed to their comfort, by enabling them to meet anticipated demands; by fixing habits of providence and œconomy; and shewing the fruitful results of the smallest efforts of self-denial, and of a well-directed use of their straitened resources. These are points belonging to what George Herbert well calls ‘the Parson's completeness,’ which, as connected with the well-being of our people, have an important bearing upon the effectiveness of our Ministrations. *Country Parson*, Ch. xxiii. and *Bishop of Winchester's Charge*, p. 49.

¹ See his *Life*, and *Essays to do Good*.

intimate connexion with every day's employment; the comfort of the Gospel; and the work of preparation for eternity—all these will furnish topics of conversation with them, of familiar interest and inexhaustible fullness. Yet in conversing with them, we must not so deal in exhortation, however animated and impressive, as to forget the main object of imparting intelligent doctrinal views of the Gospel. Truth is the only medium by which Divine influence is received. It is therefore most important, that our familiar intercourse, no less than our public Ministry, should be marked by the distribution of a simple, connected, and enlarged Scriptural system. In pursuing this course throughout our pastoral walk, the connexion between successive visits may be usefully kept up by means of a text, left for consideration, which, even if it could not be read, might be repeated, till learned by heart. Something would thus be left behind of practical application; furnishing us also with a useful memorandum in our next visit of the prominent tone of our last conversation; and directing us to continue in the same track, or to strike out a new path, as circumstances might dictate.

The form of pastoral intercourse may admit of considerable variation. While it may often be wise to combine with Ministerial instruction, a sympathizing interest in their temporal difficulties, at other times our contact with them should be purely upon spiritual principles. Let them be alone with us in the presence of God. The delicacy and weakness of the early impressions need this intimate intercourse. The awakened inquirer is filled, and often at the same time confounded, with the engrossing novelty and importance of the subject. He wants a guide, a confidential counsellor, a tender and experienced friend. He must

be taken aside, and made to feel himself the object of exclusive solicitude. Others again in a hesitating suspense need the filial confidence of pastoral communion—to have their convictions cherished, re-touched, deepened, and directed more immediately to the Saviour, as the charm that dispels the allurements, and as the power that breaks the chains, that still hold them to the world. The serious, humble, and perplexed need the same pastoral confidence to “open their grief, and receive the benefit of ghostly counsel and advice.”¹ In our communication however with these confidential cases, the mode of continued address may be most advantageously exchanged for affectionate catethetical inquiry. This is usually found most effectual in eliciting the gradual disclosure of individual perplexities, and thus in obtaining the most valuable materials for accommodating our instruction to their need.

It is also most important, that the communion of a Minister with his flock should be equalized—that he should shew himself equally the friend, the father, the Minister, of all—“a debtor to the wise and to the unwise,” — “without preferring one above another, doing nothing by partiality.” He should be to his flock—as the soul to the body—as the head to the members—invigorating every part of the body—the lowest as well as the highest; and contributing to the benefit of every member alike. It is invariably found, that the suspicion of favouritism fosters a spirit of pride in its objects, and of envy in the rest, and therefore is most destructive to the unity and prosperity of the flock. As far as this confidential character is preserved, there will be as little occasion to enforce relative rights and obligations, as to fix the precise boundaries

¹ See Exhortation in Communion Service.

of authority and obedience between man and wife, where the spirit of the marriage relation is maintained.

Perhaps this department of the ministry may be deficient in that excitement, which makes it so delightful to preach to a congregation hanging upon our lips. There will be great demands for patience, self-denial, and severe exercises of faith, the cost of which has not always been duly calculated. Henry Martyn confessed, that at times he was 'tried with a sinful dislike of his parochial work,' and seemed frequently 'as a stone speaking to stones.'¹ The Writer was struck with the observation of a local preacher, who has subsequently relinquished his work for secular engagements—that from his experience he considered a Minister's life to be the happiest in the world, and that he had never known such enjoyment, as when in the act of preaching the Gospel. Without feeling inclined to dispute his judgment, he was reminded of his incompetency to decide upon the matter. For whatever be the delight of proclaiming the glad tidings of the Gospel to sinners, yet in the express commission of the parochial Ministry, it is chastened with a weight of responsibility, unknown to the mere Preacher, and known to none but the laborious Parochial watchman. The "necessity laid upon us"²—the "watching for souls, as they that must give account"³—the darkness thick as night; and alas! the presage of eternal night, so often attendant upon death-beds—the wisdom and tender faithfulness, which such scenes imperiously demand—

¹ Life, p. 60. Dr. Witherspoon observes, on the testimony of conscience to this Ministry—'We may gratify our vanity by preaching; but diligence in private can scarcely arise from any thing but a sense of duty.'

² 1 Cor. ix. 16.

³ Heb. xiii. 17. 'Let the pastor, who trembles not at these words, tremble at least at his own blindness and insensibility.' Quesnel in loco.

the "travailing in birth" for souls once and "again, until Christ be formed in them"¹—the disappointment on account of professed Christians, and the weeping over the falls of real ones—the daily contact with sin, obstinacy, and impenitence—and finally, the conflict with the powers of darkness—all these combine in our sacred employment, wakening emotions of the most opposite character, and yet issuing at length in the triumph of faith; so that we are at once "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

This general view of the principles of the pastoral work will show at once its laboriousness, and its importance. To acquaint ourselves with the various wants of our people; to win their affections; to give a seasonable warning, encouragement, instruction, or consolation; to identify ourselves with their spiritual interests, in the temper of Christian sympathy, and under a sense of Ministerial obligation; to do this with the constancy, seriousness, and fervid energy which the matter requires, is indeed a work of industry, patience, and self-denial. And yet, how else can we "make full proof of our Ministry," but by ready obedience to the injunction,—“watch thou in all things; do the work of an evangelist?”²

If therefore we should sketch (as illustrative of these principles) the portrait of a Christian Pastor—it would be that of a Parent walking among his children—always at hand—to be found in his own house, or met with among the folds of his flock—encouraging, warning, directing, instructing—as a counsellor, ready to advise—as a friend to aid, sympathize, and console—with the affection of a mother to lift up the weak—“with the long-suffering” of a father to “reprove,

¹ Gal. iv. 19.

² 2 Tim. iv. 5.

rebuke and exhort." Such a one—like Bishop Wilson in the Isle of Man, or Oberlin in the Ban de la Roche—gradually bears down all opposition, really lives in the hearts of his people, and will do more for their temporal and spiritual welfare, than men of the most splendid talents and commanding eloquence.

CHAPTER II.

TREATMENT OF CASES IN THE PASTORAL WORK.

A VARIETY of cases occur in our Pastoral communication, in the many subdivisions of the two grand classes, which divide the world;¹ and much inefficiency has resulted from their inaccurate treatment. A few hints may be suggested on some of the most important of them—chiefly drawn from the observation of the New Testament Ministry, as illustrative of the several specialities of our Christian Ministrations.

SECTION I.

THE INFIDEL.

MANY of us come in contact with infidelity in its most malignant and popular forms—impatient of all moral restraints—breaking with a bold hand the bonds of social order—and defying the authority of the government of God. There is *the sensual infidel*. His belly or his money is his God. He wants to be

¹ Gregory treats of no less than thirty-six cases (chiefly relative situations, or moral dispositions;) but with very scanty exercise of spiritual discrimination. De Curâ Past. Part iii. c. 1.

persuaded, that there is no God, because he wishes there was none; and because he is afraid, lest there should be. This class are not thinking men; but they “have heard the blasphemy of some;” they try to believe a doctrine, which they trust will quiet their consciences, and prove the warrant, encouragement, and refuge of sin. They are ready to “beseech us to depart out of their coasts”—“saying—Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”¹ Our Lord traces this infidelity to its source—not the want of evidence, but the love of sin; and teaches us to deal with it, by aiming at the conscience; setting forth the sentence of condemnation; convincing of sin; exhibiting the correspondence of the heart with the declarations of God; and contrasting with it the holy character of the Divine work.²

There is also *the copying infidel*—such as those who are often in infidel society. They dare not confess a cause, which is a standing jest with men of wit. They cannot endure their scorn. They are overpowered by their bold assurance. They hear plausible arguments advanced, or some witty speech uttered against religion. They take it up as their own. The ambition of being thought a little above their own class makes them retail it—This is common among young men, just advancing into all the pride and pruriency of self-conceit. We can only endeavour to expose their foolish pride, inculcate a teachable spirit, and bring before them the simple authority of the Divine testimony, which to candid minds will come with more powerful conviction than all the witty sayings of wise fools.

There is also the shrewd infidel. Such as Hume,

¹ Matt. viii. 34. 1 Cor. xv. 32.

² John iii. 19—21.

Gibbon, and Paine. Here we find the love of sin gathering strength from the pride of reasoning. They will not believe what they do not understand—a palpable proof of inconsistency and ignorance; for upon this principle they must reject the works as well as the word of God; not to say—that their views of revelation are most degrading—supposing that a system within the grasp of the puny intellect of man could be worthy of God, or proceed from God. They want facts and arguments—such as prophecy, miracles, the establishment of the Gospel in the world by such weak instruments in opposition to all the power and learning of man; its influence upon the civilization, reformation, and renewal of the earth. How can they account for this, but by the power of God? Let them be pressed with their own difficulties—far greater than those of the Gospel. Let them be convicted of credulity, in being constrained to believe far more improbable circumstances than Divine revelation, in order to make way for their disbelief of the Gospel. Let them be shown the cruelty of their system—“despoiling”¹ men of their only hope—excluding every glimmer of light in the vista of futurity—offering nothing for the present distress—promising nothing but doubt, anxiety, and despair. Can a system so unconnected with the happiness of man have proceeded from a God of love? Is there not a far stronger motive to embrace the Gospel than to reject it? If it be false, believers are as safe as unbelievers—If it be true (and has the unbeliever no misgiving here?) where is his lot for eternity?

Yet to infidels of every class and character, let Christ be set forth. Thus we exhibit the strongest

¹ Col. ii. 8.

evidence of our faith in providing a remedy commensurate with every distress. Thus was St. Paul's Ministry among infidels, honoured with the Divine blessing.¹ The prevalence of this poison should lead us to inculcate upon all, especially the young, the study of the Evidences of Christianity, that they may "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear."²

SECTION II.

THE IGNORANT AND CARELESS.³

SUCH were the multitude in our Lord's time. He instructed them in the spirituality and requirements of his law, mingling however the strongest encouragement with most searching developements of the heart.⁴ The nature and immediate duty of faith in himself;⁵ the awful consequences of rejecting his salvation;⁶ uncompromising exhibitions of the terms of the Gospel;⁷ the most unfettered invitations to all that were willing to accept them⁸—these formed the prominent topics of his general instruction. In individual cases he improved tangible points of conviction, as means of dealing closely with consciences.⁹ The exhortations

¹ Acts xvii. 22—34.² 1 Pet. iii. 15.

³ Baxter's practical treatises contain the most arresting addresses to the unconverted, that probably have ever come from the pen or heart of man. A more decided tone of evangelical doctrine and motive would however have added much to their power. It may be doubted also, whether his method of Christian establishment is as direct and explicit, as the freeness, fulness, and simplicity of the gospel would warrant.

⁴ Matt. v.—vii.⁵ John vi. 29—65.⁶ Matt. xi. 20—24.⁷ Matt. xiii. 44—46.⁸ Ibid. xi. 28—30. John vii. 37⁹ Luke vii. 40—50. xii. 13—21. John iv. 5—26.

of the Apostles were of course more explicit. Their arrows of conviction were dipped in the blood of Christ ; and the display of the cross was the ground of their successful pleadings of love.¹

This, like every other class, must be treated according to character. The principle and power of unbelief needs to be laid open to them, as the source of all the proud reasonings against the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and of the awful contempt of its gracious offers ; and issuing at length in hardness of heart, and stupidity under the means of grace. Close remonstrances also upon the inexpressible sinfulness and danger of their state, especially in the aggravated guilt of the rejection of the Saviour, cannot be inapplicable. The case should be dealt with, like that of men, asleep in the immediate neighbourhood of fire—“ saving them with fear, pulling them out of the fire.”² A solemn statement has often been owned with an awakening blessing. The man also should be brought, if possible, to a point, and some appeal fastened upon his own declarations. He thinks but little of eternity ; yet he hopes to go to heaven, *because he wishes to go thither*. Here is ground to work upon—the folly of making his sincere and indolent wishes the ground of his hopes. He would give every thing on a death-bed to be assured of his safety : why is he not in earnest now ? He knows Christ as a Saviour, but has no personal interest in him—no sense of want, no spiritual exercises of faith. He needs instruction, like a babe or a heathen, upon the elementary truths of the Gospel. The hardened of this class must be treated with the greatest mildness ;³ as if we spoke with

¹ Acts ii. iii. iv. xiii. with Zech. xii. 10.

² Jude 23.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

the most compassionate regard to their condition,¹ and with the most "beseeching" entreaties—"Be ye reconciled to God."² Let them not suppose, that by denouncing the judgments of God, we seal their condemnation; but rather, that we endeavour to awaken them to escape from it—that we shut them up under wrath, only as the means of bringing them to Christ.³ And thus every exposure of wilful infatuation must be connected with the invitations of the Gospel.⁴ Many, who are repelled by remonstrance, and proof against reasoning, have been overpowered by love. The cross of Calvary has arrested the attention of the most ignorant;⁵ wrought irresistibly upon the most stubborn;⁶ and exhibited the vanity and wretchedness of the world to the conviction of its most determined votaries.⁷ The exhibition of the Saviour in his all-sufficiency, suitableness, faithfulness, and love, affords ample warrant for enlivening hope in the most desperate cases.

SECTION III.

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS.

THE young ruler exemplifies our Lord's treatment of this case.⁸ Conviction was wanted, and the law was the medium employed. Ignorance of the law is the root of self-deception. An acquaintance with its spirituality unveils the hidden world of guilt and defilement, brings down self-complacency, and lays the sinner prostrate before the cross.⁹ In another case, he made the

¹ Comp. Jer. iv. 19. Mic. i. 7, 8.

² 2 Cor. v. 20.

³ See Gal. iii. 23, 24.

⁴ 1 Sam. xii. 20—22. Ezra x. 2. Isa. lv. Acts ii. 23, with 37—39.

⁵ Matt. xxvii. 54.

⁶ Acts ix. 4—6.

⁷ Gal. vi. 14.

⁸ Matt. xix. 16—21.

⁹ Rom. vii. 9.

necessity of an entire change of heart the instrument of conviction.¹ He denounced the enmity or hypocrisy of this spirit as the wilful rejection of his gospel, and as making a "stumbling-stone and rock of offence" of the foundation laid for the trust, glory, and salvation of his people.² The Epistles to the Romans and Galatians exhibit this principle, entrenched in a system of external religion, without faith, love, contrition, separation from the world, or spiritual desires; or in a dependence on the mercy of God, even in the rejection of the ordained means of its communication of which the man has no other notion, than as a help to supply deficiencies, upon the condition of future amendment.

What makes the case of the self-justiciary so affecting, is, that we have no gospel message to deliver to him. Our Master "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."³ The righteous need him not, seek him not, and have no interest in him. Our commission is to sinners; and judging from this man's own account of himself; of the goodness of his heart; the correctness of his conduct; and the multitude and excellency of his meritorious actions—we should conceive him not to belong to that "lost" race, whom "the Son of man came" expressly *and exclusively* "to save."⁴ Indeed his spiritual ignorance presents a difficulty, at the outset, in dealing with him. We have with all simplicity and plainness laid before him the fallacy of his expectations. We have "judged him out of his own mouth"—nay, we have even compelled him to judge and to condemn himself. Yet the next conversation brings with it the mortification of finding him as far as ever removed even from the

¹ John iii.

² Matt. xxi. 42—44.

³ Matt. ix. 12, 13.

⁴ Luke xix. 10. with xviii. 9—13.

comprehension of the gospel. The same dependence upon his own performances is expressed, as if no attempt had been made to undeceive him, and no confession extorted of the weakness of his foundation.

To pursue the self-justiciary into all his "refuges of lies," and to sweep them away before his face, is a most laborious task. When disturbed in his first refuge of his own righteousness, he flies to repentance. Half-distrusting this security, he strengthens it by the merits of his Saviour, by the delusive substitution of sincerity for perfection, or by the recollection of his best endeavours, as a warrant for his hope in the mercy of God. But place him on his death-bed: is he sure that his works are not deficient in weight? that he has attained the precise measure, commensurate with the full and equitable demands of his holy and inflexible Judge? What if "the hand-writing" should then be seen "upon the wall," "against him and contrary to him?" Let sin, the law, and the Saviour, be exhibited before him, fully, constantly, and connectedly; let the pride, guilt, ingratitude, and ruin of unbelief, be faithfully and affectionately applied to his conscience; let him know that the substitution of any form of doctrine, or course of duties, in the place of a simple reliance on Christ, turns life itself into death, and hinders not only the law, but even the Gospel, from saving him.¹ Who knoweth, but thus he may be humbled, enlightened and accepted, in the renunciation of his own hopes, and the reception of the Gospel of Christ?

¹ Matt. xxi. 33—46. Comp. Acts xiii. 38—41.

SECTION IV.

THE FALSE PROFESSOR.

OUR Lord sifted this character by applying to his conscience the spirituality of his doctrines,¹ the extent of his requirements,² the connexion between the heart and conduct,³ and the remembrance of the different standards of God and the world.⁴ The Apostle, in dealing with him, determines, that the renewal of the heart, and not outward attainments or privileges, evidenced the real Christian.⁵ The Epistle of St. John reduces these chief marks and trials of the heart to love, as the presiding and animating principle of Christian experience and conduct.

It is however difficult to apply these lines of the Scriptural model. The false professor is a very Proteus, evading our grasp by a constant change of form. Yet if *he speaks of his comforts*, how unlike the awakening and serious consolations of the Christian! There is no dread of self-deception, no acquaintance with his own sinfulness, no assault from Satan, because there is no real exercise of grace, or incentive to Christian diligence. *If he speaks of his state before God*, can he abide the Scriptural test of the holiness of God, of the "exceeding breadth" of his law, with its fearful disclosure of his utter depravity and defilement? Can he bear to have the detailed evidences of a radical change, the indispensable importance of an interest in Christ, and the solemn alternative, of "having the Spirit of Christ," or "being none

¹ John vi. 60—66.² Luke xiv. 25—33.³ Matt. vii. 15—23. xii. 33—35.⁴ Luke xvi. 15.⁵ Rom. ii. 17—29. ix. 6, 7.

of his”¹—closely pressed upon him? Has the awful consideration—that if “Christ is not in him,” “though he speak with the tongues of men and of angels,” he is a “reprobate”—ever led him to “examine himself, whether he be in the faith, and to prove his own self?”² *If he speaks of his love*, he owns his obligations; but what are his views of the Divine excellency of the Saviour? Where is his readiness to bear his cross? Where are the exercises of delight in his word, or the evidences of union with his people? Maclaurin admirably observes, ‘that the lively and vigorous exercise of love must be judged of by a better standard, than the natural outward signs of inward emotions, depending upon constitution and other causes; that a main thing, in which its true strength consists, is its influence on universal holiness in practice, which is a matter of great importance for the discovering the delusions of self-deceivers.’³ How often is the Saviour’s merit made—whether avowedly or not—a support for a bold confidence in insensibility to all spiritual affection and Christian deportment! And therefore, as the sum of the whole inquiry—“Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.”⁴

Perhaps we are scarcely warranted to expect the discovery of every case of this kind. Notwithstanding all our vigilance, some counterfeit coin will pass for gold. Judas among the Apostles, and Ananias and others in the Primitive Church, are standing mementos, that it is not our prerogative to search the heart. *Generally* however the false professor betrays himself by some instance of inconsistency, which

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

² 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

³ Essay on Divine Grace, sect. v.

⁴ 1 John iv. 7, 8.

affords a handle of conviction in dealing with him. Dislike to the character of spiritual religion, and to subjects of conversation connected with it;¹ prevalent love of the world;² and unsubdued inveterate tempers,³ indicate his want of sincerity in the reception of the truth. The love of holiness; and the desire of Christian advancement, were not the ends he had proposed. The truth was received as a speculative dogma; "not in the love of it." As therefore it was loosely held, it was ineffectively applied, and (when inconvenience was threatened) readily surrendered. Such persons are the great stumbling-block to the young and unestablished Christian—and not less so to the world. Their discovery should make us cautious and slow in forming our judgment of characters; while at the same time we must be careful not to treat the sincere with coldness and suspicion.

SECTION V.

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL CONVICTIONS.⁴

THE power of conviction was strongly and variously exhibited under the Ministry of the New Testament. The thundering discourses of John pierced the consciences of his hearers. Many were interested and partially reformed.⁵ Under our Lord's first sermon, and in the cases of "the sorrowful young man," and "the chief rulers,"⁶ there must have been con-

¹ Cant. v. 7.² 2 Tim. iv. 10.³ Gal. v. 24.⁴ Halyburton's Memoirs may be referred to, as giving the most graphical delineation of the diversified and conflicting exercises of conviction.⁵ Matt. iii. 1—6. Luke iii. 10—14. John v. 35. Mark vi. 20.⁶ Luke iv. 22—28. Matt. xix. 22. John xii. 42, 43.

siderable power of conviction; yet (as the want of universal obedience proved) without Divine influence. The practical effects in the sons of Zebedee, Matthew, and Zaccheus on the other hand,¹ exhibited spiritual and permanent conviction. Under the Apostolic Ministry, Peter's hearers, Cornelius, Sergius Paulus, Lydia, the jailor, the Gentile hearers at Antioch and other places,² showed the fruits of spiritual conviction, in faith, love, and universal holiness; while the frantic Jews under Stephen and Paul, and trembling Felix,³ displayed the conviction of conscience, overcome by the natural enmity and the love of sin. Few cases more peculiarly need (not, of course, miraculously) the gift of "discerning of spirits," to determine the character of the conviction, in order to its safe and successful treatment. Its unsoundness or sincerity will be determined—whether it respects the misery or the defilement of sin;⁴ its consequences merely, or its character;⁵ whether it springs from fear of wrath, or regard for the honour of God;⁶ whether it extends to some sins, or to all;⁷ whether it is consistent with the love of sin, or producing abhorrence of and separation from it;⁸ whether its influence is temporary or abiding;⁹ whether it repels us from Christ in the spirit of despondency, or leads us to him in the exercise of faith.¹⁰ In the early stages of sincerity, it is often a mixture of legal and evangelical

¹ Matt. iv. 18—22. ix. 9. Luke xix. 1—10.

² Acts ii. 37—46. x. xiii. 12. xvi. 14, 15, 30—34. xiii. 44—48. xiv. 1, &c.

³ Acts vii. 54. xiii. 45. xxiv. 25.

⁴ Gen. iv. 13, 23, with Ezra ix. 6.

⁵ Exod. ix. 27, 28, with Luke xv. 18.

⁶ 1 Kings xxi. 27—29, with Psalm li. 4.

⁷ Matt. xxvii. 4, with 1 Cor. xiv. 24.

⁸ 1 Sam. xv. 30, with 2 Cor. vii. 11.

⁹ John v. 35, with Acts ii. 37—47.

¹⁰ Matt. xxvii. 5, with Acts xvi. 30—34.

principle, resulting more from sense of sin, than from apprehension of Christ, and productive rather of alarm than of contrition—of terror than of tenderness and love.¹ Self-deceitfulness never shews itself more than in a state of conviction. Some are neither at ease in their sin, nor heartily seeking for deliverance. Perhaps they will yield partially to the Gospel, but they rest short of a full restoration. In such cases we must be most careful, that we do not heal the wound, before it has been searched and probed to the bottom.² A slight healing is the prelude to the most fatal delusion. Much wisdom however is requisite in forming an accurate judgment of the case, to separate what is natural from what is spiritual. If, indeed, the excitement be merely the irritation of natural conscience by the law, it will rest in sullen dissatisfaction, or in “a form of godliness” without the power. It must therefore be kept alive, deepened, alarmed, and enlightened by close statements of the danger of yielding to the entanglements of unbelief by the urgency of an immediate reception of the Saviour in his invitations to the unworthy—by the self-delusion and certain ruin of abiding under present convictions; and at the

¹ Perhaps the difference between legal and evangelical conviction may be illustrated by the comparison of Acts ii. 37. with Zech. xii. 10. The one precedes, the other follows, faith.

² Nothing can be more judicious than Calvin's remarks on this point—'Ubi homines senserint, quam graviter deliquerint, illic non statim curandus est dolor, quemadmodum impostores delinunt conscientias, ita ut sibi indulgeant, et se fallant inanibus blanditiis. Medicus enim non statim leniet dolorem, sed videbit, quid magis expediat; fortè magis augebit, quia necessaria erit acrior purgatio. Sic etiam faciunt prophetæ; cum vident trepidas conscientias, non statim adhibent blandas consolationes; sed potiùs ostendunt, non esse ludendum cum Deo, et sollicitant, sponte currentes, ut sibi proponant terribile Dei iudicium, quò magis ac magis humiliantur.' In Joel ii.

same time encouraged with the assured acceptance of the weakest act of faith. The reception of the Saviour is a proof of spiritual life in conviction, and the spring of its continued exercise. Thus both Peter's and Stephen's hearers were pierced—the former only spiritually changed. Whatever feeling, therefore, brings us to Christ, heartily weary of sin, sensible of danger, thirsting for mercy, and anxious to walk by the rules of the Gospel, is the convincing power—not of conscience, but of the Spirit of God. But what tenderness is required, lest we “break the bruised reed!” Let the wide distinction between the indwelling and the indulgence of sin—between its occasional prevalence and its allowed dominion—be accurately marked; nay, even the overruling of its lamented incursions in deepening the contrition, establishing the watchfulness, exercising and strengthening the faith of the afflicted penitent. Let him view the strong encouragement to repeated application to Christ. If he be really mourning over his guilt, and desiring the pardon and love of the Saviour (a frame of mind inconsistent with the least indulgence of sin), he has his promise for the rest of his soul.¹ In bringing his wants and desires to the Gospel, he will find increasing light, consolation, and strength, for the maintenance of the spiritual conflict, until judgment. “be sent forth unto victory.”²

¹ See Matt. xi. 28.

² Ibid. xii. 20. For some most discriminating views, and encouraging directions, relative to these cases, consult Bowles' Past. Evang. Lib. ii. c. 19, 20.

SECTION VI.

THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

JUDGMENT, experience, tenderness, and acquaintance with the natural character, circumstances, and habits of the individual, must direct the treatment of this most important case. The young Christian is awakened and excited, but very imperfectly enlightened. There is much self-deception and self-righteousness. *His repentance* is sincere, but partial; more exercised from the trouble, than from the sinfulness of sin; but slightly connected with faith; and with little consciousness of the habitual backsliding of the heart from God. *His faith*, though genuine, is confused; rather a feeling or a train of feelings, than an influential principle; associated with comfort rather than with holiness; its principle confounded with its exercise, or different exercises mistaken for each other. There is but little of "knowledge and judgment"¹ in the actings of *his love*; so that, though pleasing in its impressions, it is not that uniform and powerful energy of self-denial and devotedness, which characterizes the adult Christian. He has many infirmities to exercise our forbearance; and many difficulties to excite our sympathy. Glad should we be, could he reach at one flight the summit of Christian perfection. But meanwhile, let us not, in violation of our Master's instructions,² expect from him the higher requirements of Christian maturity.

As the general rule, he must be "fed with milk,

¹ See Phil. i. 9.

² Matt. ix. 14—17. and Calv. in loco.

not with meat.”¹ Yet this must include a *full and explicit exhibition of the Saviour* before him. Let Him be set forth in His personal dignity, in His Mediatorial character, and in His relation to His people, that his heart may be drawn to Him in the simplicity of the Gospel, that he may feel Him to be his life, and continually come to Him, “that he may have life more abundantly.”² Our Lord instructed his disciples gradually in a clearer revelation of himself, as the means of their advancement;³ for doubtless to “grow in the knowledge of” Him is the most efficient means of “growing in grace.”⁴

The conflict of faith is a subject of suitable instruction for this case. The perplexities of our Lord’s disciples arose from their indistinct perception of the character and exercises of faith. They knew nothing of its power in realizing unseen help; and, connecting it only with the sensible comfort of their Master’s presence, they were utterly unprepared for any emergency in his temporary absence from them.⁵ And thus the young Christian needs to be correctly informed in the nature of faith, as an habitual dependence upon Christ, grounded upon the sense of need, and the Scriptural warrant of his power and love. This principle, though fruitful in consolation, is perhaps most vigorous in a state of conflict,⁶ when striking its roots deeper in the heart, in humility, contrition, and self-abasement; so that spiritual depression (when not directly arising from the indulgence of sin) is the trial of its reality, and the peculiar season for its exercise.

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 2.

² John x. 10.

³ See Matt. xvi. 21. xvii. 22, 23. and John xiv.—xvi.

⁴ 2 Peter iii. 18.

⁵ Comp. Matt. xiv. 24—26. and Mark ix. 14. with Matt. xvii. 19, 20.

⁶ Job xiii. 15.

Let him also in *his happy experience* be directed to be thankful, but watchful; lest it become the occasion of his pride rather than the matter of his praise; his security rather than his encouragement; his rest rather than his enjoyment. *In clouded experience*, let him ask his heart—"Is there not a cause?" Let him be humbled, not discouraged—quickened to prayer, not hindered by unbelief. Let him suspect his heart, not the promises of God. Let him see his own weakness and unworthiness, without forgetting the power and love of his Saviour. The changes in the Divine dispensations are most needful for his Christian establishment; shewing what God can do for him, and how little he can do without God. Let him know, that the assurance of faith is best realized in humility, self-denial, love, separation from the world, and general consistency of conduct; the absence or deficiency of which would cast a shade over the genuineness of his faith in the hours of his most elevated enjoyment.

The nature, certainty, and requisites of the Christian cross must be insisted upon. Our Lord set the cross plainly before his disciples, at a very early period of his instructions,¹ that they might wisely calculate the cost of impending trials. This is an admirable pattern for the Christian teacher, now that the profession of the Gospel is so often taken up in the dream of a flowery path; as if the crown were easily won, or ever could be won, without the daily cross; or as if there could be a moment for the young Christian, when the denial of his own will, wisdom, or lust, will not be imperatively called for. No outward circumstances of the church can alter these requisitions.

¹ Matt. x. 34—39.

He is not forced to be a Christian; but if he will be a follower of Christ, these are the terms.¹ He has indeed no need to complain of their strictness; for he will find increasing necessity for them to the end. The subjugation of his mind to the wisest regulations; the loosening of his heart from the world; the support of the grace of his Divine Master; and a closer conformity to his spirit and example; will be the happy and permanent fruits.

“*The spirit of a sound mind*” must also be strongly inculcated. A defect in judgment is a frequent attendant upon the early stage of the Christian profession. The mind loses its balance under the first influence of a strong excitement. The affections are tumultuous rather than rational. Like “the crackling of thorns under a pot,” they blaze furiously, but with little heat and speedy extinction. Enthusiasm, delusion, foolish and unjustifiable practices, often spring up with serious personal injury, and much to the hinderance and discredit of the Gospel. Hours are sometimes wasted even over the Bible in a superficial and irregular course, under the mistaken conception, that not only vain pleasures, but solid pursuits, are inconsistent with the exclusive claims of Christian devotedness. Duties also, instead of finding their proper place, are suffered to interfere with each other, and even sometimes neglected upon the same mistaken supposition, that all our time must be spent in reading and prayer. Thus also one set of graces is exhibited to the exclusion of others of a different character but equal importance; so that a mis-shapen figure presents itself in the place of the symmetry of Christian graces in “the beauty of holi-

¹ Matt. xvi. 24.

ness." The watch needs a regulator as well as a main-spring, to maintain the wheels in that uniform, harmonious, and subservient motion, which accurately represents the succession of time. Every disposition must be regulated by the authority of the word, and exercised in its due proportion and combination, if the young Christian would aspire to the high privilege of "adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

We would suggest also, the importance of inculcating *subjection and conformity to superiors (whether in age or relative connexion) in all things consistent with the paramount authority of God.* Young Christians (those particularly who are young in age) often offend here. Their zeal is not tempered with humility and self-denial; and they not unfrequently bring needless offence upon religion, and bring themselves into difficulties, which (as they afterwards discover) might have been avoided by a more subdued temper. Where the natural character is yielding, firmness in withstanding worldly compliances should be urged. Where it is naturally firm, submission—especially to parents—should be pressed; it having been too often found, that their warm zeal for God has proved to be the indulgence of their self-will and impatience of restraint. Let it be ever enforced, that nothing but the positive obligation of a Divine command can set aside the deference so justly due to parental authority.

It might also be a wise part of the Ministerial superintendence of the young Christian, to provide for him some friend, whether older or of his own age, whose sympathy, experience, and consistency would prove of material service. But as it regards our own counsel, admonition, and encouragement — "*Press*

forward,” must be our constant watch-word. Let him not satisfy himself with being a sincere Christian. Let him seek to be an advancing Christian. Let him remember, that his present attainments are but the commencement, and not the finishing, of his work. Let him constantly examine and exercise his faith. Let him guard against neglecting his own heart in remissness or security; against needless fellowship with the world; inordinate enjoyment of lawful pleasure; neglect of the Word of God; formality in duty; and the power of besetting sins and temptations. Let him expect, that the rest that he has found, as the fruit of holy violence,¹ will abide with him in the same course of conflict. Let him know, that the privileges, which he had anticipated at some indefinitely distant period, were his portion from the earliest dawn of his faith, as being not attached to its degree, but to its sincerity; and that his more full apprehension and enjoyment of them, so far from giving licence to indolence, will furnish a fresh stimulus for renewed and increased exertion. He thus discovers forgiveness of sin to be his present possession,² union with Christ as the direct source of his spiritual life³—“springing up,” by the power of the Spirit in his heart, “unto everlasting life.”⁴ Thus receiving the promise, the Author, the earnest, and first-fruits of salvation—he “receives salvation” itself, as “the end of his faith.”⁵

¹ Matt. xi. 12.² 1 John ii. 12.³ John xv. 1—5.⁴ John iv. 14.⁵ 1 Peter i. 9.

SECTION VII.

THE BACKSLIDER.¹

WHAT Minister is not conversant with this most affecting case? Unsoundness of doctrine, love of the world, the indulgence of sin, and the neglect of prayer, are palpable causes of backsliding. The power of unbelief, and the want of Christian establishment, are causes less obvious, but probably not less frequent or injurious. The unsettled professor cannot plead his uncertain title to the promises of support; and therefore, being unable to apply for strength upon the Scriptural warrant, he is left to his own unassisted weakness. His comforts (if indeed he could speak of them) not being built upon a personal interest in the Gospel, were feelings, fancies, delusions — not faith—no solid ground of support.

Sometimes we find the *backslider in a hardened state*, advancing rapidly on the high road to apostacy. Instead of acknowledgment of sin, there is a flinching from conviction. Solemn recollections (such as “Where is the blessedness that ye spake of?”²—Are the thoughts of eternity peaceful?) the awful declarations of Scripture,³ or (as in David’s case) a sudden and unexpected self-accusation, may however produce conviction.⁴ Yet until the man begins to feel restless and miserable, the case is hopeless.

The *convinced backslider* should be treated with pity,

¹ The reader is referred to a tract by the late Andrew Fuller, for the most full and instructive description of this case, and of the best mode of treatment. Compare also Blackwell’s Method. Evang. pp. 212—223.

² Gal. iv. 15, also iii. 1—4. ³ Such as Prov. xiv. 14.

⁴ 2 Sam. xii. 1—13.

as if we really grieved over him—not spared, but yet felt for—his conscience probed, yet with tender recollection—the depth of his departure pointed out, yet himself “restored in the spirit of meekness.”¹ This was the treatment of the incestuous Corinthian; first handled with severity, in order to produce conviction; when convinced, sustained and confirmed in the most tender regard, “lest haply such a one would be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow,” and “Satan should get advantage of” the church.² Let him be exhorted to a diligent use of means, and a resolute abandonment of the ways and intercourse which had drawn him aside. Let him be guided afresh, as if he had never known the way, to the foot of the cross, there to “look on him, whom he has pierced, and mourn,”³ in the assurance that the same love that pardons sins, “heals backslidings.”⁴ The instance of Peter will illustrate the tender exercise of love employed at once to deepen conviction, and to complete the restoration.⁵ The power of this love may be expected to mark the subsequent character with a deeper hatred of sin—a more contrite abasement in the recollection of helplessness—a more careful circumspection,⁶ of Christian conduct, combined with a most constant attention to the means of grace, and with a higher estimation of the Saviour.

¹ Gal. vi. 1.

² 1 Cor. v. 1—7. with 2 Cor. ii. 1—11.

³ Zech. xii. 10.

⁴ Micah vii. 18. Hosea xiv. 4. The whole book of Hosea, together with Jer. ii—iv. 1, deserves most careful study for the treatment of this case.

⁵ Luke xxii. 61, 62. Mark xvi. 7. John xxi. 15—17.

⁶ Comp. Isa. xxxviii. 15.

SECTION VIII.

THE UNESTABLISHED CHRISTIAN.

THE *sincerity* of our Lord's disciples under his personal Ministry, was not more evident than their *want of establishment* in faith and knowledge. In many of our people we mark a similar defectiveness in Christian knowledge or spiritual perception. Grace is more in the seed than in the operation. It wants exercise to draw it out into practical influence, that love may be more fervent ; faith more active ; prayer, if not more frequent, yet more spiritual. The Apostle did not treat this case with the soothing tone of sympathy, but with the strong stimulants of conviction and reproof.¹ And indeed such professors, if they do not actually come short, at least "seem to come short."² If they are alive, it is a bare sickly existence, with little power of exertion, or capacity for enjoyment. They undervalue even their scanty measure of progress ; else would they reach forth for higher attainments and more aspiring hopes. True grace sets an edge upon the appetite, rather than satisfies it. But where unbelief is faintly resisted ; indolence substituted for exertion ; and they are "lying on their faces," instead of exercising painful diligence in their spiritual interests ;³ "the things that remain," for want of being "strengthened," will be "ready to die."⁴

Their deficiency in the Christian establishment also appears in the narrowness of their charity, and in their want of exertion for the spiritual good of their neighbourhood, or the general cause of Christ.

¹ Heb. v. 11—14.

² Josh. vii. 10. with 2 Pet. i. 5—10.

³ Ibid. iv. 1.

⁴ Rev. iii. 2.

Some of our people, of whose Christian sincerity we feel no reasonable doubt, evidence but a faint influence of constraining love, in their unconcern for the moral wretchedness around them.

Defects in self-government, and in the several branches of the Christian temper, may here be naturally expected. As the principles of the gospel are little understood or applied, their operation is feeble and inconstant. For the same reason, a worldly spirit displays itself, from the want of the counteracting bias of faith in active and habitual exercise.¹ Neglect of the Ministry (the institution ordained expressly for the prevention of this evil)² is the frequent cause of this defective profession. The Apostles exhibited the fullest display of evangelical privileges, not only for the consolation of the established, but probably for the excitement and conviction of the indolent. For what do they know of being "filled with all joy and peace in believing?" How little comprehension have they "*with all saints*, what is the height, and depth, and breadth of the love of Christ," as the medium of being "filled with all the fulness of God!" Should we not warn them against resting in the perception of truth, without realizing that experimental and practical influence, which would give them a clearer apprehension of its value, and a sufficient impulse for its retention? And should we not labour to stir up a close self-inquiry, an earnest habit of prayer, deeper self-acquaintance and self-abasement, increasing activity in Christian obedience, and a stronger excitement to ascend the elevated stations of faith, that they might gain more extensive, animating, and heavenly prospects?

¹ John v. 4, 5. Gal. vi. 14.

² Eph. iv. 8—14.

SECTION IX.

THE CONFIRMED AND CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN.

CONSISTENCY in every branch of Christian temper and practice is requisite to form the character here noticed. The Writer feels little qualified to suggest any remarks applicable to this case. The sum of the prayers and exhortations of the Apostles for their converts, was, that their views of doctrine might be enlarged; their sense of obligation deepened; their standard of practice more elevated; their enjoyment of privileges more exciting; and their fruitfulness more abundant. The Apostle prescribes a different mode of treatment to other cases.¹ He would have us substitute instruction in the deepest and most solid truths, in the room of the elementary principles of the Gospel; entering largely into the counsels of God concerning his people—the security of his covenant on their behalf—the more full exhibition of his perfections in the work of their redemption—of the office and work of Christ, and of the Divine life derived from him. By this system of “strong meat” adapted to their adult state in the Christian life, they will be “nourished up in the words of faith and of sound doctrine,” and “their senses” will be yet further “exercised” in spiritual discernment. By this course of treatment we shall expect to observe in them a marked difference from novices in religion. The same acts indeed belong to the young and to the old Christian, but in the latter case they are more grounded and solid. Christian ordinances are attended by the

¹ Heb. v. 14. with vi. 1—3.

young with greater ardency, but with the old from deeper principle. The affections in the young are more vigorous and lively. But what is gradually lost in the natural decay of their sensible operations, is abundantly compensated in the improvement of their understanding, resolution, and judgment. Spiritual subjects have changed their seat in the soul. If they are less sensibly exercised in the affections, they are more permanently fixed in the mind. The choice is more settled, intelligent, and uniform. If there be less of spiritual excitement, there is a deeper insight into spiritual corruption, a deeper fixedness of habit in the Gospel.

Apart from affliction (a most important means of grace to the Christian,¹) the continual actings of spiritual life and joy strengthen and establish his daily progress heavenward. His release from the dominion of sin; his fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, death, and resurrection,² his continual view, and application of the cross, constrain him with irresistible and most delightful influence. "The beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord"³ prostrates his soul in admiring, adoring, and transforming contemplation. Thus sinking in humility, he rises higher and higher in knowledge, holiness, and love. His esteem of his Lord more deeply impresses his heart. His desire towards him glows with increasing fervour. His delight in him is more constant and assured. His gratitude to him is more wakeful and animating. And thus in every exercise of Christian love, he evidences a growing conformity to the Divine image. It is difficult to turn to human writings for a full exhibition of this Christian glory. Mr. Romaine

¹ See John xv. 2. 1 Pet. v. 10.

² Rom. vi. 1—11.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

has drawn, so far as it extends, a simple and beautiful portrait; imperfect however, as wanting the practical features of the Scriptural sketch. Baxter has thrown out its features with much fire, force, and power of enchantment; but he has often so disguised his figure with his own constrained feelings and metaphysical trammels, that it seems like an Angel in fetters. Perhaps Leighton may be said to have given the full portrait, both in his writings and in his character, with as little touch of human infirmity, as can be looked for, till the brighter days of the church.

Yet with this exhibition of love, as the grand material and means of edification, must be combined a positive enforcement of Evangelical warning. David has expressly acknowledged the value of this use of Scripture;¹ nor did any fear of legality deter the Apostles from intermingling it with the language of exhortation and encouragement. The importance of its judicious adaptation to the circumstances of the Christian is obvious. For though Scriptural warnings have but one meaning in themselves, they admit of a different application to the several classes of our people. To the ungodly, "the law worketh wrath" in the apprehension of the displeasure of their enemy and judge. The same threatenings with the righteous, will produce a holy fear of God, a godly fear of sin, and a quickening stimulus to the use of the appointed means of preservation. Thus the execution of the judgments of God upon the wicked, whilst it increases the believer's love for the holiness of his dispensations, exercises his mind with a wholesome fear of a "jealous God."² As therefore a prominent display of "the terror of the Lord" would savour of the covenant

¹ Psalm xix. 11.

² Psalm cxix. 119, 120.

that "gendereth unto bondage;" so an exclusive view of the promises of the Gospel, blotting out all enforcement of its threatenings, would not only incur the guilt of mutilating the word of God, and failing to "warn the wicked of his way;" but would deprive the believer of a divinely-ordained means of his preservation and establishment.

We have an admirable pattern of this mixed mode of address in the Apostle's exhortation to the Hebrews. Though he styles them—"holy brethren, and partakers of the heavenly calling," he does not spare to "rebuke them sharply," as "dull of hearing;" even setting before them the doom of their rebellious fore-fathers, and of miserable apostates among themselves, as an incentive to that holy fear, which is always a necessary part of the grace of perseverance; while he concludes the whole with an expression of his good opinion concerning them, and with displaying the "strong consolation," arising from the immutable certainty of the foundation of their hope.¹ Thus while the dark ground occupies so large a portion of the canvass, it is evidently with a view of displaying more vividly the lustre and attraction of love shedding its beams over the gloom.

The Writer feels deeply impressed with the responsibility of this individual and discriminating Ministry. The recollection, that every word we speak to the several classes has a bearing upon their eternal state—clothes it with inexpressible importance, as it respects themselves, our own consciences, and the Church of God. The conscience is the subject, on which the matter of our office acts; and in its various exercises and perplexities it requires the most skilful treatment.

¹ Heb. iii—vi.

To qualify ourselves for this anxious service, much acquaintance with the human heart, and with our own heart in particular is requisite—together with a clear apprehension of the Gospel—a careful study of the best works on spiritual, casuistical, and experimental divinity¹—and most of all—a spirit of humble and importunate prayer for constant and increased supplies of “the wisdom which is from above.” In the direction also of the several cases, an acquaintance with the constitutional temperament of the individuals is obviously most important. A sanguine temperament would give a delusive appearance of ardour and intensity to religious impressions. A constitutional depression would obscure the symptoms even of a genuine work of faith. An undue confidence, or backwardness, would need a different tone of address—to be restrained, cautioned, or encouraged, “as the matter should require.”

The Writer does not pretend to have given in this detail a full directory for the treatment of these several cases. So diversified are the features both of sin and grace, that he has never yet gathered, either from Writers or from Ministers, any rules, which did not leave many of his cases unprovided for. The utmost attempt has been to sketch a few broad lines and trains of conversation, which might in some measure

¹ In this respect the study of the Puritan and Non-conformist Divines is of the highest importance. Such works as the “Morning Exercises at Cripplegate,”—Owen’s and Flavel’s Treatises—Baxter’s Christian Directory—Perkins, Hildersham, Bolton, Greenham, Gurnal, will abundantly repay a careful perusal. Pike and Hayward’s Cases of Conscience will also be read with interest by Ministers, who conceive with Philip Henry—“That the true learning of a gospel Minister consists not in being able to talk Latin fluently, or to dispute in philosophy, but in being able to speak a word in season to weary souls.” Life, p. 207. A small work by Rev. Robert Philip, ‘on Christian Experience,’ has drawn out some of these cases with much judgment and interest.

meet the prominent difficulties, and be readily filled up by the exercise of the mind under Divine teaching at the moment of emergency. On one particular, however, we cannot mistake, that to all, of every class and at every stage, the attractions of the cross of Christ must be unfolded, and its heavenly glory made intelligible, for every purpose of conviction and conversion, of instruction and sanctification; for the establishment, comfort, and eternal salvation of all who are willing to receive it. It is of equal power to break the hard heart, or to heal the broken heart. With the faint exhibition of it (arising from timidity, or ignorance) little power is connected: while the wilful disguise and misapprehension of it will be blasted with ineffectiveness.

CHAPTER III.

THE VISITATION OF THE SICK.

We need scarcely remark the importance of this Divinely-appointed work; ¹ which in some cases, is the only kind office, that we can do for our people. Neglect or error is therefore a main cause of Ministerial inefficiency; and involves consequences far more responsible than medical inattention or unskilfulness—the trifling away or mis-improvement of opportunities deeply connected with the salvation of immortal souls. ‘This intolerable defect in Ministers’ (as an old Writer observes) ‘never shows itself more shamefully, or with greater hurt, than when men have need of spiritual help, at the hour of death, or in the time of great

¹ James v. 14.

affliction.’¹ ‘Opiate divinity’² is too often administered to slumbering souls, instead of the awakening excitements of anxious alarm. Perhaps no where are the faith and seriousness of conscientious Ministers more painfully exercised; and no where do they realize more sensibly the importance of “rightly dividing the word of truth.” The temper of the individual (who sometimes hates the remedy more than the disease), and the recollection of the fearful mischiefs which might result from a small error in his treatment,³ add much to the difficulty; so that (as seems to be intimated) it is “one among a thousand,” that may peculiarly excel in this work.⁴

The promiscuous use of a general form cannot be recommended.⁵ The 67th Canon determines the use of the appointed service, ‘as the Preacher shall think most needful and convenient’—a wise and necessary discretion, since (whatever be its excellence) it partakes of the disadvantage of ‘not being particular enough for each several occasion.’⁶

In offering a few hints upon the subject—we would note—*The duty of weighing our words, with much*

¹ Marbury’s Exposition of Psalm xxxii. 5. Augustine calls such Ministers *desolators*, instead of *consolators*. Habitual negligence in the visitation of the sick, is punished by deposition by the strict law of the Scotch Kirk. Smith’s Lectures, xxiv. We need scarcely observe, that this obligation includes—‘not visiting barely, when one is sent for: he is to go as soon as he hears that any of his flock are ill.’ Burnet’s Pastoral Care, ch. viii.

² Winchester’s Ser. p. 181.

³ In medicina nihil exiguum est.—Galen.

⁴ See Job xxxiii. 23.

⁵ See Isaiah xxviii. 27.

⁶ Bishop Wilkins’ Gift of Prayer, p. 12. Indeed the service, as presuming the sick person to be a penitent, is obviously inappropriate to the melancholy multitude of cases of an opposite description; so that (as Bishop Barrington justly observed) ‘in many cases the funeral service might be used with almost as much propriety as the office for the sick.’ Charge, 1797. p. 31. Bishop Horsley gives the same judgment on the exclusive use of the service. Charges, p. 153.

previous meditation and prayer upon the case. It too often meets us in the regular routine, and is counselled only by the suggestion of the moment. ‘It is rather strange’ (as Osterwald remarks) ‘that Ministers should take so much pains to prepare their discourses for the pulpit, and take so little pains to prepare for what they should say to the sick, or how to conduct their visits to them, though it is one of the most difficult and important offices in the Ministry.’ Habitual readiness, without much considerate and prayerful exercise, will afford no warranted expectations of our Master’s blessing.

Our approach to the sick should be in the garb of a friend. Our aim (unlike that of the medical attendant,) is often unconnected in his mind with any definite prospect of benefit. It is more necessary, therefore, that we should enter fully into the sufferer’s case — that our spirit, manners, and voice should exhibit manifest sympathy—such as our Master displayed, when he stopped the bier at the gate of Nain, and wept at the tomb of Lazarus.¹ Nothing more successfully engages confidence, than when the official garb shows—“a brother, that is born for adversity.”²

We should endeavour to obtain an accurate knowledge of his case. And herein lies no small difficulty, arising from the vast variety of individual cases (each of them having some distinguishing characteristic)—the great mixture and combination found in each, even when that characteristic, which denominates and determines the case, is ascertained—and from the variation of apparently characteristic and other circumstances. Yet this knowledge must be obtained. The physician cannot prescribe without feeling the pulse, and en-

¹ Luke vii. 12, 13. John xi. 35.

² Prov. xvii. 17.

quiring concerning the diet and habits of life. He takes pains to converse with friends, and gains his information from every quarter. Thus must we gather from the best information—and as far as possible, from Christian sources (such as a Christian parent, master, or neighbour)—sources however, which must be selected and improved with the most cautious prudence.

In the treatment of the case, many unexpected and unforeseen symptoms may be evolved for our direction. The general course would lead us to introduce the Scripture before the sinner in some of its diversified forms of application. The Psalms are peculiarly suitable from their great simplicity of language and sympathy of feeling; and especially as furnishing matter and moulding for prayer, both for and with the sick person. Our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus is a most important statement for the instruction of the ignorant and careless, as embracing the two main points of the necessity of the change of heart and faith in Christ—the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Saviour.¹ His subsequent discourse to the multitude is universally applicable, as marking the freeness of the Gospel, for the encouragement of the sinner; and its spirituality for the conviction of the self-righteous.² His closing discourses to his disciples are fraught with consolation and support to the penitent and established Christian.³ Other portions of Scripture (such as the Epistles) will furnish equal variety of suitable instruction. Sometimes it may be advisable to take a whole book, or several connected chapters, in order to give a comprehensive acquaintance with evangelical truth. If this become too general and pointless, we might select some detached portions, that admit of a more close and par-

¹ John iii. 1—21.

² Ibid. vi. 25—65.

³ Ibid. xiv—xvii.

ticular application. Perhaps indeed the two might be combined. As from every passage must be brought out some exhibition (more or less direct) of Christ; having arrived at him as the centre of all—"the way, the truth, and the life," in all and in each; we may easily, through him, put the several parts together, and enlarge on each separately to any extent. The present power to seize the features of the case, or to turn to suitable texts with sufficient individual appropriation, is much to be desired. Something from the mouth of the individual will give the most pointed ground of our address; while a few kind and confidential inquiries often will invite his confidence, and draw out some close and serious recollections on the state and prospects of his soul. In doubtful cases we may profitably advert to these personal inquiries; adding our plain and serious view of his state; and leading him to earnest prayer for increasing self-acquaintance.

In pursuing the treatment of cases, "long patience" will be often called forth. A cold unmeaning assent may meet us from day to day—perhaps from month to month. These tedious cases require variation—not of the truth, but of the medium of its presentment. A word casually dropped—a tract left behind us—occasional visits rather of a familiar than of an official character—will be probable means of access to their consciences. Yet too great effort to "bring forth new things" may partake too much of human wisdom. The unvarying repetitions of the "old" statement of truth have generally proved as "the waters that wear the stones."¹ In other cases, we may have to guard against needless discouragement from legal expressions in common use among the sick, which must

¹ See Job xiv. 19.

often be tried by the standard of their own imperfect mode of communication, rather than by the rules of strict accuracy.

No regulations can prescribe the precise measure of attendance upon the sick. Yet if our visits be frequent, they should not ordinarily be long. In cases of peculiar repulsiveness, some intermission would be advisable—watching however unexpected openings or important emergencies. The time also of visiting may vary. Sometimes regularity is desirable, often inexpedient; customary attendance usually losing something of its impressiveness. A system without a system is generally to be preferred—perseverance and watchfulness rather than exactness. Under all circumstances, however, the convenience of the sick should be a matter of primary consideration. None of us, we presume, will restrict our course of attendance to those who seem to profit by it. There will be doubtless cases of spiritual indulgence, and refreshment. Yet must the more unfavourable cases be allowed their full claim upon our attention. If less exciting, they will eventually be found not the less profitable department of our visitations, in the exercises of compassion, self-denial, and dependence on Divine aid; and in the encouragement connected with the proffer of a free salvation to those, who, in the want of it, are “ready to perish.”

The *importance of Ministerial faithfulness* cannot be too highly estimated. This is not a time for common-place topics of trifling, or for “prophesying smooth things.” The emaciated countenance, the symptoms of death, mourning relations around the sufferer, call indeed loudly for tenderness. But love to the immortal soul, and intense interest in its eternal destiny, call louder still for fidelity of treatment. To

be plain, therefore, and studiously faithful in our exhibition of truth, must be our first concern. And here the greatest danger arises from the sufferer's willingness to be deluded, and his greedy desire for comfort; from the false tenderness of his misguided friends; and from the self-pleasing indolence of our own hearts.¹ Yet the knowledge of his real condition either way is for his advantage—that he may enjoy the comfort of its soundness, or be saved from the certain ruin of his own delusion—‘While you are tender, therefore,’ (Mr. Mason charges us) ‘be sure to be faithful, and have respect to the approbation of your conscience afterwards. Remember, that you are a Minister of the Gospel; and must not sacrifice the cause of truth and godliness to a false shame or tenderness.’² Both extremes, however, must be avoided—we must be exclusive on neither side; but, like skilful physicians, must mingle emollients with corrosives;³ labouring to work a solid, not a sudden cure; and never causing pain, but from the necessity of the case, and with the purpose of effecting a radical cure. In this spirit, any appearance of harshness will reflect upon our message,⁴ not upon

¹ ‘Our chief danger in the present age seems to be in erring on the side of candour and complaisance, and not dealing with mankind with sufficient plainness and fidelity. Many of my people have died, with whom my conscience has afterwards accused me of not dealing so plainly as I should.’—Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers, i. 59, 60. *Melius est cum severitate diligere, quam cum lenitate decipere.* Augustine.

² Student and Pastor. By the author of the celebrated treatise on Self knowledge, p. 114—a work with many serious hints upon the Ministry. Its scanty and defective views of Christian doctrine have been lately Socinianized by the editorial labours of Dr. Toulmin.

³ For specimens of this healing exercise of faithfulness, see 1 Sam. xii. 20—22. Ezra x. 2. See some valuable hints in Cecil's Remains—‘On Visiting Death-beds.’

⁴ See Mark ix. 44. xvi. 16. Comp. Lam. iii. 22—33.

the delivery of it; while in the full display of the encouragement and invitations of the Gospel, we shall make it evident, that we only pointed out the danger, to save the sinner from ruin, and to set forth a sure and everlasting refuge.

Nor must we forget to *insist upon the love of him that afflicts*. Here we see that clear view of the paternal character of God,¹ which sustained the Redeemer's soul in his bitterest moments of suffering.² It is a Father's love that strikes, in order to humble his rebellious child; and that supports his humbled child with such sustaining peaceful joy, that he kisses the rod, while it is in the act of smiting him; and feels that comfort in the endurance of affliction, which he had anticipated in its removal. In this connexion also, we must *point out the reason, the end, the duties, and the privileges of affliction*,³—that it “cometh not from the dust,” or without the Providence of God—that it would never be permitted without necessity—that its duties are self-inquiry, watchfulness, submission, faith, and thankfulness—and that the privileges will be realized in the removal of his sin, the more abundant influence of the Spirit of prayer, the loosening of his heart from the world, and a more intense fixedness of affection upon his heavenly inheritance. Thus, when his “soul is as a weaned child,” and he is ready to do and suffer cheerfully the will of God, he will receive the full benefit intended by these visitations of love.

It is of vast moment to make *Christ the sum of our*

¹ Psalm ciii. 13. with Heb. xii. 5—11.

² Matt. xxvi. 39, 42. John xviii. 11.

³ See Archbishop Laud's Manual of Prayers in Stearne's *Tractat. de Visit. Infirm.* Clergyman's Instructor, p. 392. Cradock's *Knowledge and Practice* (ch. xxix.) gives a full and edifying view of this subject.

instructions to the sick. This indeed is the specific object of our commission;—as the “Interpreter” of these painful dispensations, to exhibit the, “uprightness of God” in punishing and pardoning sin—“having found a ransom;” and thus to lift up in the sick chamber, as in the camp of Israel, the brazen serpent, with the warrant and inscription—“Look and live.”¹ If therefore we use “the law to bring to Christ,”² we are not Ministers of the law. Nor do we think it necessary effectually to alarm before we set forth Christ. The physician placed before the sinner’s eyes will excite his desires, and soften his heart for the reception of all subsequent instruction. Thus we proclaim an open door under the most discouraging circumstances³—invitation to all—discouragement to none—security to the people of God. All instruction must be considered *essentially defective*, that is not grounded upon this free and full display of the Gospel.⁴

We cannot forbear to remark *the comfort of going to the sick only as the Lord’s instruments.* This is the warrant of our commission—“Messengers”—sent by God for this express purpose. What a relief from that excessive anxiety, which often hinders the freedom and cheerfulness of our spirit! And what a warrant to pray in faith for God’s power in his own ordinance; which, like every divine institution, carries a promise with it; the pleading of which, and the benefit resulting therefrom, are hindered only by our own unbelief!

It must be recommended, as a general rule, to conclude instructions with short but serious prayer: with

¹ Job xxxiii. 23, 24.

² Gal. iii. 24.

³ See Acts viii. 22. Isa. xliii. 24, 25. Hos. xiii. 9.

⁴ See John vi. 35—37.

as direct and detailed a reference as possible to the circumstances and spiritual condition of the sick; and with a view to sketch before him the precise petitions and blessings suited to his state. The state of the sick, or the circumstances around them, may not always allow of the act of prayer. Yet ejaculatory petitions may be often mingled in the course of conversation, so that the prayer may be offered really, if not formally, according to the Scriptural rule, and with a promise of spiritual, if not of temporal, benefit.¹

It is scarcely necessary to observe the peculiar caution requisite in administering the sacrament to the sick. While to the Christian pilgrim it may be the true viaticum for the last stage of his journey; by formalists, and even by the careless, 'it is desired, as the passport on the road to heaven, which they expect will answer their purpose at once.'² A familiar exposition of John vi. would be the best preparation for the reception of the sacrament; not as enforcing the obligation of the commemorative command (to which there was no immediate reference); but as illustrating the nature and operations of that faith, which alone qualifies the communicant to "discern the Lord's body."

The instruction of the attendants upon the sick obviously belongs to this subject.³ Indeed it is often a most important medium of indirect address to

¹ See James v. 14—16.

² Stonehouse's *Sick Man's Friend*—a work of defective Christian doctrine, but of much valuable practical detail, chiefly compiled from Doddridge, Mason, and others.

³ 'In every thing that a Minister says to a sick person, he ought to keep three things steadily in view—the influence which it may have on the person, if dying—the influence which it may have on him, if he recover—and the influence it may have on persons in health who are about him.' Gerard's *Pastoral Care*, p. 168—a work of sensible and serious character; but for the most part unconnected with an elevated standard, and with Evangelical motives.

the sick. The scene before their eyes presents much matter for personal impression ; in the vivid picture of the consequences of sin, the vanity of the world, the nearness and unspeakable importance of eternity, and of an instant preparation for it. The immense responsibility of their station should be deeply inculcated, together with the obligation to add the care of the soul of the sick to the care of his body ; to keep off the too successful diversion of impertinent topics ; to improve seasonable opportunities of reading or suggesting suitable instructions ; and to seek in special prayer a permanent blessing both upon him and upon themselves.

Nor must the *convalescent be omitted in our consideration*. Bishop Burnet recommends us to exact from the sick solemn promises of renovation of life in the event of their restoration.¹ Yet must these promises (if called for) be inculcated in the deepest sense of utter helplessness, and entire dependence on Divine strength. We might say to each of them—" Behold, thou art made whole ; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." ² To awakened and softened minds we might recommend daily consideration of the lessons which they have learned in this school ; ³ daily prayer to keep alive the teaching of the Spirit in their season of affliction ; ⁴ daily recollection of their peculiar trials ; ⁵ daily renewal of their sick-bed vows ; ⁶ and daily prayerful " remembrance " of " them that are in adversity, as being themselves also in the body." ⁷

¹ Past. Care, ch. viii. Comp. Stearne's Tractatus, ut supra—a treatise with most admirable systematic rules ; but with an almost total destitution of enlivening views of the gospel.—Clergyman's Instructor, p. 408.

² John v. 14.

³ Ps. xcii. 12. cxix. 67, 71, 75.

⁴ Isaiah lxiii. 15—19. lxiv. 1.

⁵ Lam. iii. 19—21.

⁶ Psalms ciii. cxvi.

⁷ Heb. xiii. 3.

CHAPTER IV.

PASTORAL MINISTRY OF THE YOUNG.

THE consideration of this Ministry is of primary importance in the detailed system of our work. Such was the judgment of one, eminently qualified to speak upon every division of the pastoral work.—‘My first and greatest success’ (says Baxter) ‘was upon the youth; and so it was, that when God had touched the hearts of the young with the love of goodness, and delightful obedience to the truth; in various instances their friends, their fathers, and their grandfathers, who had grown old in an ignorant and worldly state, did many of them fall into a liking and loving of piety, induced by their love to their children, who now appeared so much wiser and better, and more dutiful to them.’¹ So sensible was Dr. Doddridge of the importance and difficulty of this Ministry, that he resolved at his entrance into the Ministry—‘I will often make it my humble prayer, that God would teach me to speak to children in such a manner, as may make early impressions of religion upon their hearts.’² Mr. Brown of Haddington observes of himself—‘I lament, that I have not been more diligent in catechizing and exhorting the children in my congregation. I am persuaded, that these exercises are some of the best means, which, Ministers can use for promoting the welfare of souls.’³ This

¹ Introduction to his *Compassionate Counsel to Young Men*.

² Orton’s *Life of Doddridge*, ch. v. And again in a letter to a friend—‘Oh! could I spend more of my time in *catechizing children*, in exhorting heads of families, and *addressing young people!*’ Chap. viii.

³ *Brown’s Life and Remains*, p. 28. Dr. Owen remarked to the

morning seed-time is connected with peculiar encouragement. As has been beautifully observed—‘This is perhaps the most delightful of all the Minister’s labours. He has indeed ignorance to contend with ; but ignorance is more easily overcome, than that worse knowledge of “the counsels of the ungodly,” which commonly belongs to more advanced years. He has evil to encounter ; but it is the evil of nature, not yet rendered obstinate by habit ; of vicious propensities, not yet strengthened by indulgence, till the attempt to eradicate is nothing less than the “plucking out a right eye, or the cutting off a right hand.”—All reason, all experience, all Scripture, concur in this—“*In the morning sow thy seed.*” Often has it sprung up, and brought forth the fruits of grace, when it had seemed to outward eyes to have been choked with tares.’¹

We have been well reminded of the high responsibility of this Ministry, as providing for the progressive renovation of the strength of our national and Apostolical Church.² Under a deep sense of this responsibility, we proceed to investigate some of its most interesting particulars of detail.

same effect—that ‘more knowledge is ordinarily diffused, especially among the young and ignorant, by one hour’s catechetical exercise, than by many hours’ continued discourse.’

¹ Bishop of Chester’s Sermons on the Christian Ministry, pp. 23—26.

² Bishop of Winchester’s Charge, pp. 30, 31.

SECTION I.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL—ITS IMPORTANCE—CONSTITUTION—AND
SUPERINTENDENCE.

No difference of opinion can exist on the importance of a Sunday School.¹ It connects itself with almost every department of the Ministerial system. It is often instrumentally *an adult school*. Parents in not a few instances have been taught to read by their children, thus qualified to instruct them. Suitable instruction is also often sent to them from Scriptural lessons of the School; which, retailed with affectionate and interesting simplicity, may form a part of the childlike conversation in the family circle. And thus we speak extensively through this attractive channel, and with a force of interest, which no other system could convey. In many cases also the palpable happy fruits of Sunday instruction, have brought parents to shame on account of their ignorance, and have excited a sincere and active desire to partake of the advantages. And thus the School enters into almost every family as a medium of instruction. It is indeed the lever, whose force is felt over the whole parish. ‘No one’ therefore ‘can

¹ The advantages of Sunday Schools have been strongly set forth in many of our Episcopal Charges. Bishop Law remarked—‘There are few means, by which a Minister of our Church can more effectually promote the cause of order and religion. A Sunday School is an easy, cheap, and unmixed good.’ (Primary Charge, 1825.) Bishop Blomfield enforced the necessity of a Sunday School ‘*in every place*—taught, in the failure of other resources, by the Clergyman himself, or some part of his family.’ Primary Charge at Chester, 1825. It is scarcely necessary to refer to the strong language of recommendation, with which Bishop Porteus addressed his Clergy on this interesting subject.

have been long entrusted with the care of a parish, without observing, that it is through the agency of his school, directly or indirectly, that he will best win his way to the hearts of his people, as their spiritual Minister and friend, for their souls' good.'¹

On many accounts, therefore, the instruction of the young is of the highest moment ; and though, like every other department of the Ministry, it will be the occasion of deeper condemnation in the numerous cases of neglect or misimprovement ; yet many are there now on earth, and many more in heaven, who will remember this important advantage in their songs of everlasting praise.²

Often also is it the seed-time for the future harvest. As the immediate result, the pulpit Ministry becomes more intelligible and interesting.³ In many cases of subsequent reception of the truth, (as in the in-

¹ Bishop of Winchester's Charge, p. 31.

² Cotton Mather mentions Eliot's prayers, when the question of Ministerial inefficiency was discussed in their synod—' Lord, for schools every where amongst us ! that our schools may flourish ! that every member of this assembly may go home, and procure a good school in his town ! that, before we die, we may be so happy as to see a good school encouraged in every plantation of the country.' The effects of Sunday Schools in the principality of Wales, under the instrumentality of the late Mr. Charles, are among the most remarkable instances of the revival and extension of religion in the present day. See full and most interesting details in his life (p. 237—258) a most edifying piece of Ministerial biography.

³ Might it not be well, if the plan, arrangement, and illustrations of our sermons had a more specific reference to the children's apprehension, and to a subsequent inquiry of their intelligence ? Not to speak of the advantages to ourselves in the cultivation of a more simple mode of address, the benefit to the children would be most important, in forming and fixing their habit of attention in the house of God, &c. Still further—if the Scriptural lesson in the school were to form the subject of one of the sermons of the day, the unity of the system about to be detailed would be complete, and the school be most advantageously connected with the Pulpit Ministry.

stance of Timothy,¹) the advantages of a previously enlightened mind are sensibly felt ; while in less decisive instances, the restraints of instruction operate with wholesome effect. A village with or without a Sunday School, presents to the most casual eye a difference in moral order and quietness. Many respectable servants, apprentices, and even parents, have also been produced by this beneficial influence. And thus in the deficiency of the main success, much is effected for the recipients of instruction of subordinate importance. Nor must it be forgotten, that the teachers, in watering others, have often themselves been watered ; and have realized in their interesting official engagements impressions of serious religion hitherto unknown.

The constitution of the school is the course of instruction adapted to the taste and capacities of children—varying from the first rudiments to the highest parts of the system, but ever keeping the main object in view—the intelligent and saving knowledge of the scriptures. No satisfactory advance is made towards this object, by the mere repetition even of Scriptural lessons, however well selected and arranged. For if the memories of children be stored with doctrines and precepts, while the intelligent powers remain wholly dormant, no interest can be excited—no permanent impression can be made. In the routine of mechanical instruction, small classes with a competent supply of teachers are preferable. Each teacher might be provided with a bag, containing a copy of the books used in the class, and a card ruled by the superintendent for a quarter of a year—marking on one side the names of the children, with their conduct,

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

attendance, and lessons; and on the other side, the scriptural, catechetical, and other exercises for the quarter.

It is a too frequent fault in the Sunday School system, that—whether from the disproportionate size of the classes—the length or number of the lessons—or the imperfect manner of their repetition—little or no time is left for catechetical instruction. The same may be said of the time allotted to reading. One or more chapters of the Bible are gone through: attention is paid to a correct mode of reading; but still, as before, no time is given to explanation. The Church Catechism, or a hymn, is repeated after the same mode; either of them may be learned by rote, without one intelligent idea of their contents finding entrance into the mind. Now, the want of connexion, arrangement, and explanation, in this course of instruction, deprives it of interest and profit. More simplicity is needed in the plan—a less variety of books with greater unity of system. Let the lessons *for the elder classes* consist of *some good catechetical exercises* on the Church Catechism; breaking each part into the simplest questions, to which the children should be required to supply the answers. Thus not only their memories (as where the answers are subjoined and learned by rote) are employed, but their minds are exercised, and their own thoughts are elicited. The explanation of difficult words or terms, with Scripture proofs of the doctrines, might be added. From the want of this system, probably a small proportion only of those, who have learned the Church Catechism by rote, have attained to any intelligent apprehension of this most admirable formulary of Christian doctrine.—Some *preparatory catechetical exercises* on some

easier catechism might gradually train the younger classes for an accurate understanding of our own catechism.¹

Next—Let *the lessons consist of Scriptural exercises*. A system of Bible truths might easily be arranged for the elder classes, to which they might be required to bring their own proofs. Or the system might be applied in a yet more simple form throughout the school.

Each doctrine or precept, supported by one or more of the more obvious and popular texts, might be written on the back of the teacher's card, as one of the lessons for the quarter, and thus be distributed in every class. Portions of Scripture connected with this lesson might be read by the children, and in part committed to memory for the succeeding Sunday.²

¹ This system has been applied to the national catechisms of the Kirk of Scotland, with considerable ingenuity and effect. Initiatory catechisms have been prepared for the younger classes, containing a more simple statement of the truths, found in the established formularies; thus preserving the children's minds from the distraction of a multiplicity of books and catechisms, and at the same time gradually preparing them for ascent into the more intelligent classes. The same principles have been extended also to Scripture exercises with much patient and successful investigation. Some parts of the machinery of this system may be deemed cumbersome (and indeed might easily be dispensed with); but the principles are well deserving the consideration of parochial Ministers. Their full development may be seen in an Essay entitled 'The End and Essence of Sabbath School Teaching, &c.' Gall, Edinburgh; Nisbet, London.

² With teachers of piety, judgment, and sufficient cultivation of mind, the following somewhat similar scheme of instruction has been tried. The Minister has fixed upon a course of subjects, (such as the principal histories of the Bible; or the Miracles, Parables, or Life of Christ,) one of which he appoints as the lesson for the ensuing Sunday; sketching out for the teachers in writing the plan which he wishes them to pursue, in questioning and explaining the subject in their several classes. The Minister might easily devolve the labour of this plan upon a copyist, to transcribe from his own sketch the teacher's pattern for every class; while the scheme would operate most usefully in preparing the children's minds for

Those who cannot read, might have the portion read to them, and be questioned upon it. The mode of oral teaching might here be most usefully applied; a mode, which though it may appear very slow, (the time scarcely allowing of thus learning more than one or two verses on the Sunday) yet has many advantages, of curtailing the expensive demands for books, of fixing a habit of attention and impression, and of ensuring perfect lessons. As one advantage of this unity of system, the Minister is enabled to examine the whole school with far greater facility, than he could have gone through the examination of the several classes. And this occasional proof of his interest in their charge is most invigorating to the teachers; nor is it less important to the school, as tending to check any rising evils of irregularity or insubordina-

his examination, and directing the general course of Scriptural instruction throughout the school. Take as an illustration one of the first and most important events of Scripture—The Fall of Man. Gen. iii. I. As it regarded Satan. 1. His object—To shew his enmity against God—To make man as miserable as himself. 2. His subtilty in accomplishing his object, 1. Undermining Eve's confidence in God, 1, 3—Appealing to her weakest part—her appetites—her senses, 5, 6. II. As it regarded man—The inability even of perfect Adam to keep himself—The gradual effect of the poison, 2, 3, 6. Eve tempted, becomes the tempter—The instant fruit of shame, 7,—fear—sense of guilt, 8—10.—prevarication—laying the fault upon the other, 12, 13. III. As it regarded God—His law broken—his love slighted—his justice called into exercise, 14—19—himself separated from his creatures, 24—his wisdom—contriving a marvellous way of recovery, 15. &c. Learn to dread being left alone in temptation.—Eve was weak—much more are we—Watch against hard thoughts of God's commands or prohibitions. Suspect all that falls in with the lusts of our own hearts. Remember the constant need of self-denial. When you fall into sin, beware of keeping from God, as Adam did—of hiding or excusing sin—of throwing the blame upon others. Humble yourself before God—The way to come to God is more plainly revealed, than it was to Adam. Improve it for obtaining pardon. See here all the principles of sin, in disobedience—rebellion—and unbelief. Learn to trace all the sin and misery in your heart, and in the world to this source. Learn to adore the plan, that restores and raises the sinner, and glorifies God.

tion, and to cement the bond, which ought ever to subsist between the Minister and the younger members of the parochial family. Nothing can be more consonant with the grand designs of our work, than such an effort to instruct their minds in holy and heavenly truth. We thus appear in one of the most interesting characters of our office—that of “a teacher of babes”—child-like in the treatment of children. In this view, if the various demands on our time and strength do not allow of our personal superintendence, it would be desirable that we should open or close the school, or both, with some short catechetical exercise or address, concluding with singing and prayer. Every point of contact with this most important part of our flock will be found eminently to qualify us for distributing the truth to our people with more discriminating aptitude and effectiveness.

The *Hymns that are learned in the School* should be simple and evangelical—but not too experimental. They form an interesting part of the system, and often fix upon the memory with peculiar power of retention. In order ever to keep in view the book of God as the basis of instruction, the children might be exercised and questioned upon the Hymns, and Scripture proofs required of their main doctrines.¹

Yet must this course of exercises always leave room for Scripture, read over several times in small portions.

¹ The Sunday School Union Hymn Book, and one for the use of St. James's School, Leeds, may be safely recommended. Every child should learn Watts' Hymns for Children, and be questioned upon them. For the use of such teachers as may need help, a set of Questions and Answers upon these inimitable Hymns, have been published by Westley, London. Miss Taylor's Hymns, though exquisite in their kind, are inferior to Watts' both in fulness and simplicity of doctrine, and in the tone of Scripture language; and on these accounts are less suitable for Sunday Schools.

And this will often be far preferable to larger portions ; answering the end of improvement in the letter, and affording the opportunity of comprehending the spirit and application of the lesson by a catechetical examination of its contents. The reading lessons should be selected from the simplest parts of Scripture. The narrative parts of the Gospels might be chosen for the younger classes, and indeed, at the commencement, for all. Then the New Testament might be read through in its course. Not indeed that the Old Testament should be neglected. Yet, as the time is too short to allow of a regular progress through that most interesting department, a slight outline might be taught orally, and a portion of school-time well employed in reading at length some circumstance connected with that outline.¹

Upon the whole—it is expedient to diversify the details of instruction, as *far as is consistent with the unity of the system*—‘ to drop the truth into narrow-mouthed understandings ; and thereupon to graft exhortations, which may draw the catechumen into declared resolutions of piety, which is one of the things, where an abundance of wisdom and prudence may be demonstrated.’²

In order carefully to inculcate the most implicit reverence of the sacred book, it will be necessary to guard against undue deviations from the Scriptural form of instruction. Youthful obituaries, however interesting, should be introduced but sparingly even into the unoccupied moments of the school. They often tend to the excitement of a fictitious taste, which

¹ It has often been found useful to read some of the most interesting Scripture narratives (such as the history of Joseph, &c.) to the class, as a reward for good behaviour, after the routine of lessons and reading by the children has been accomplished.

² Mather's Student and Pastor, pp. 197, 198.

indisposes the mind to solid and didactic instruction, and leads it to consider the simple reading of the book of God, rather as a task imposed, than as a privilege bestowed. Narratives of this interesting character and youthful application will find their more suitable place in a Sunday School Library.

The fearful spread of the infidel poison deepens our views of the importance of grounding the children in scriptural knowledge—thus providing them, as far in us lies, “with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” We should not *willingly* allow a child to leave our schools, without some general idea at least of the Divine authority of the Bible, and without the testimony of our own conscience as to the pains, with which we endeavoured to instruct him in the fundamentals of the Christian system.¹

¹ Nothing is more important in the Sunday School system, than a clear and interesting view of Christian doctrine. Perhaps the miracles illustrated by doctrinal proofs, might be an application of the well-known and effective plan of teaching the young by pictures. Instance the leper, Matt. viii. 1—4. I. His leprosy—a picture of sin. Compare Num. xi. 44—46. with Ps. li. 2, 7. Isa. vi. 5. II. His application to Christ—an illustration of faith, in his sense of need and dependence on Christ. Matt. xi. 28. John vii. 37. III. His healing—a representation of the power of faith. Isa. lxi. 1. John vi. 37. Heb. vii. 25. Some of the most obvious types, (as the brazen serpent, Num. xxi. 6—9. with John iii. 14, 15.) might admit of the same simple and interesting mode of doctrinal illustration upon the most sober principles of Scriptural Interpretation. Dr. Beattie has indeed ventured the opinion (equally unchristian and unphilosophical), that it is no use to teach children the doctrines of the Gospel, ‘*because they cannot understand them.*’ But is it desirable, that they should know them at all? If we wait for intelligence as the commencing era of instruction, shall we not find, that another instructor and another system have pre-occupied the ground? We do not expect children to understand all that they learn. Much that we teach ourselves is upon the principle of faith more than of intelligence; assured, that though there are “many things” in Divine revelation “hard to be understood,” there are none, that we are not bound to believe. We may therefore safely accord with the rules of the wisest and most experimental philosopher under the guidance of inspiration—

But the improvement of the school mainly depends upon the *efficiency of its superintendence*. The direction of the mechanism, the system of instruction, and the choice of teachers, should, as far as possible, be under the supervision of the Ministry. The selection and control of the teachers requires much prayer and consideration. They should be marked by readiness and intelligence, general good conduct, and, *if possible*, by the exhibition of the pattern of their instructions in Christian humility and love. The discretion allowed to them must vary according to their qualifications. Considerable licence may be given to piety, education, judgment, and experience. But piety with an unfurnished or undisciplined mind; or steadiness and good intention without Christian principle, require more immediate and minute control. Under all circumstances however it is desirable, that the real power should be vested in the superintendent; by whom the mechanism of instruction should be directed, and under whom all should act upon the principle of a regular system.¹

The best system, however, will be materially impeded by inefficiency in the instrumental agents. To teach the teachers is often the most effectual way of assisting the operations of the school. Want of habit and intelligence often prevents them from a clear perception of our plans; so that they either shrink from a hearty concurrence with us, or they are awkward in their attempts to co-operate. They must

“Train up a child in the way he should go”—(Set a child right at the entrance of his way.—Heb.) *“In the morning sow thy seed.”* Prov. xxii. 6. Eccles. xi. 6.

¹ The Hints published by the Irish Sunday School Society, furnish admirable suggestions on all subjects connected with the mechanism of Sunday Schools. On the department of teachers, James's Sunday Teacher's Guide, and Lloyd's Sunday Teacher's Manual may be consulted with advantage.

not therefore be left under these circumstances to their own resources. Books must be supplied to them, and the quantity to be learnt or read in the school must be restricted. They must be urged to take pains with themselves at home, in the remembrance, that simplicity of expression and explanation is no very easy attainment; and that a mechanical system, conducted without intelligence, is utterly inefficient. They must be instructed to change the monotonous tone of gravity and continued exhortation (productive only of listlessness) for the catechetical mode of address, as decidedly the most effective to maintain attention, convey information, and elicit intelligence.¹ The importance of bringing before the children clear, simple, and applicatory statements of the Gospel must be inculcated. This is no subordinate matter; for it may well be considered whether the want of Divine influence upon our Sunday Schools does not arise from a defective exhibition of Evangelical truth—the unction of the Spirit being exclusively confined to the declaration of the tidings of salvation. The teachers must also be made acquainted with the difficulties of the work—as “a work of faith, and labour of love”—with its privileges, as “fellow-workers with” God—with its responsibilities, as having the soul of each child committed to their trust—and with its requisite qualifications, of steadiness, perseverance, kindness, meekness, patience, and faith. Instruction of this

¹ The following works will furnish most valuable information and assistance to the Teacher—‘Help to the Study of the Gospels,’ (Gall, Edinburgh, Nisbet, London)—‘Fuller’s (of Bristol) Child’s Examiner’—‘Judson’s (of America) Scripture Questions,’ published by the Religious Tract Society—The Bible Teacher’s Manual (Holdsworth)—Bible Exercises, and Teacher’s Questioning Book on the New Testament for the use of the Royal Military Asylum, By Rev. G. Clarke. Glenrock Sunday School (Seeleys).

kind is of the highest consideration to them, as leading them to have their work habitually before them (instead of conceiving it to be finished with the school hours); remembering, that the children may learn from their spirit and conduct, when their Sabbath employment is little in their thoughts. In this spirit also, individual anxiety for the spiritual welfare of their charge is gradually substituted in the room of delusive satisfaction in their general attention and progress. Prayer is quickened, faith is exercised, "patience has her perfect work"—and in the midst of discouragements, and though they "see not their tokens" of success, they continue "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as they know that their labour *is not in vain in the Lord.*"¹

We must however more particularly observe upon the subject of teachers, that where (as it often happens) they are selected from the elder class, or from young persons who have left the school, a class of teachers is an important movement of the machine. We must not rely upon the instruction, which they have previously received in the school; they must be practised in the best modes of suiting the taste of children, commanding their attention, gaining their confidence, and drawing out their measure of natural capacity and information. It would be well to lend them books for their own improvement, (such as those mentioned in the preceding note,) and from time to time to take them under our personal inspection; endeavouring to direct the turn of their mind to the most efficient exercises for their important work. In general we may remark, that young teachers are far preferable to old, as being more easily instructed

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

and managed ; and having that full spring and elasticity, which act promptly on the varying exigencies of the moment, and enliven the course of serious instruction with cheerfulness and interest. Their general conduct must however, be a subject of especial pastoral vigilance ; and counsel, caution, encouragement, or reproof, grounded upon their voluntary obligations, will often be of the highest moment.

A monthly or quarterly meeting of the teachers is one of the most important parts of the Sunday School system¹ As a matter of mechanical arrangement, we are thus enabled to ascertain the progress of the school ; to investigate the hinderances to its advancement, and suggest means for their removal ; to recommend the adoption of new plans ; or encourage perseverance in the old frame work. By comparing each other's notes, many profitable questions are started, and many improving discoveries are made. We mark, where we have failed, in prayer, faith, perseverance, or interest. We remark also what parts of our system have succeeded ; and this discovery brings with it fresh energy and encouragement under more humbling recollections. These meetings are also most important in the opportunity of uniting the teachers in their work, strength-

¹ The obvious form of conducting it appears to be, commencing with prayer ; then proceeding to the business of the school, by examination of each teacher's card ; raising the children to higher classes ; discussing their conduct ; making such alterations in the classes, or in the rules of the school, as may be requisite (in which each teacher is considered to have a voice) ; throwing out suggestions or hints, as they may occur ; mentioning new books, that may be wanted ; general inquiries as to the progress of the children in reading, learning, intelligence, steadiness, or seriousness of deportment. After the routine of business is finished, endeavour to promote general conversation upon the importance of religious instruction, or particular points of detail. Then finish with exposition and prayer. Where the teachers are of nearly equal rank with ourselves, it is desirable to make it a social meeting of kindly Christian intercourse.

ening the influence of Evangelical motives, awakening a spirit of mutual inspection and provocation,¹ and uniting in special prayer for increasing energy, faith, and patience in the work, and a larger effusion of Divine influence upon it.

The system of rewards and punishments requires judicious regulation. Rewards might be distributed monthly in small books :² or annually in books of greater value, or in useful articles of clothing. We should however be careful, that the excitement of reward should encourage real rather than comparative excellence. Emulation, awakened by competition, is the principle of selfishness ; and therefore should be as far and as soon as possible repressed. As to punishment, the teachers should never be permitted to strike the children, nor the master to use any corporal correction, except by the express appointment of the superintendent. In most cases it is desirable to resign the child over to the parents for the exercise of needful discipline. Confinement beyond the hours of school is often found most efficient correction. Yet is it most important never to use restraint, until milder means have been tried in vain ; and to characterize our system rather by rewards than by punishments. Children are much more powerfully influenced by encouragement than by repulsion.³

But if the mechanism of a Sunday School—however

¹ Heb. x. 24, 25.

² Such as the Friendly Visitor, Children's Friend, or the Monthly Publications of the Religious Tract Society.

³ Where practicable, a Sunday School Library might be connected with the general system of rewards, as a useful stimulus to improvement, and enriching the mind with a valuable store of Christian principles. This library might be readily furnished from the Publications of the Religious Tract Society, and from the Youth's and Nursery Library in Bickersteth's Christian Student—a work which needs not the Writer's recommendation, as of the highest value and adaptation for Ministerial and general usefulness.

admirably regulated by Ministerial control, and however amply provided with the means of religious instruction—forms the quantum of supply for the spiritual wants of the young, it will only furnish confirmatory evidence of the comparative inefficacy of a *mere Sabbath ministrations*. For can we forget, how much that is learned at school is unlearned at home—either from the habits of “childhood and youth,” which, by an infallible judgment, are pronounced to be “vanity ;”¹ or as weakened by the neglect, or contradicted by the example, of those who ought to be their instructors? We can scarcely suppose (humanly speaking) that one day’s struggle against the stream will be able to overcome the bad habits of the other six, falling in, as they do, with the natural bias of the heart. Thus even, if bad example does not destroy the good effects of the school, yet the ground of the heart lies fallow ; weeds grow ; the boy that follows the plough all the week with no home or evening school instruction is like the iron, which, though heated in the furnace in order to be softened, has only received one blow, and has been suffered to grow cold. We scarcely discern the traces of the hammer. The iron must be heated again. What patience is needed with slow progress ! And, except it be helped forward by adventitious assistance, how little benefit can be expected from it ! In the Day and Evening Schools, connected with the Sunday Schools, we trace the effect of the repeated blows of the hammer. If therefore we are unable to link together the Sunday and Weekly Schools, we cannot forget the importance of carrying as much as possible of our Sabbath instruction into the parochial Ministry. If local circumstances do not admit of an


¹ Eccl. xi. 10.

organized system, we should investigate the influence of the school upon the general conduct of the children—upon their habits of subjection, seriousness, industry and truth; inculcating an affectionate and judicious application of Christian discipline, as the basis of the domestic economy. Where circumstances allow, we should (unless the teachers can undertake the office) endeavour to collect them during the week. Habits of frequent intercourse with them, familiar instruction in private, combined with a general readiness to unbend towards them, so that they might look upon us in the light of parents or friends—all this will materially assist to open the avenues of confidence—that most successful medium of approach to the heart. Encouragement to persevere in these exercises will not be wanted; though parochial hinderances offer much interruption to their energy and effectiveness.

The elder children also, who either have left, or are about to leave, the school, furnish a most anxious Ministration. Their age is usually the most important and critical in their lives.¹ If no power of restraint or conviction has been produced, it is too frequently the era of their complete declension in conduct. The restrictions of the school are removed; they become disencumbered of an irksome yoke; they join light and trifling companions; and we have the

¹ It has been found important to fix the period of the children's leaving the school; at the same time giving full permission to remain after that time. This operates as a restraint and encouragement upon the better children, and secures a decent dismissal to those, who would shortly, by breaking the yoke, separate themselves wholly from all kindly communication with us. The friends of education at Glasgow a few years since formed an association, called 'The Glasgow young men's society for religious improvement'—the grand object of which was to keep up the remembrance of the religious truths which had been inculcated upon them, by meeting at stated seasons for mutual encouragement and support.

grief of finding, that their course of instruction, instead of becoming a blessing, has proved the awful means of hardening them in sin. Two remedies suggest themselves to prevent this melancholy issue. First—that our plan of instruction in the school should be calculated to interest their minds, and our treatment of them such as will engage their confidence. The first of these effects will most naturally follow from a catechetical and explanatory mode; the other must depend upon the character, feelings, and conduct of the teachers, whose love to the children, if it be sincere, will usually be met with more or less reciprocal attachment. Next—that we provide some means of continuing our connexion, after they have left the school. Some of them might be engaged as teachers under our vigilant superintendence; themselves still continuing with us as learners, if we can prevail upon them to attend upon our instructions. Some separate time, either on the Sunday evening or during the week, might be devoted to them. The lesson system, except suggested by themselves, should of course be relinquished. Nothing compulsory should be attempted. They might be required to consider portions of Scripture, and to find parallel proofs or illustrations. The principal events in a book of Scripture; or the doctrines, precepts, and promises contained within a certain compass; the comparison of prophecy with its fulfilment, or Scripture proofs of the Catechism, Articles, or other formularies of our church, might profitably exercise and interest their minds. Intercourse with them should be encouraged in every possible way, by employing them at our houses; interesting ourselves about their temporal concerns; lending them useful books; endeavouring to place them in respectable and serious



families; making inquiries respecting them of their masters; inviting them to come to us in their periodical visits to their friends from service; and in every way maintaining affectionate sympathy and communication with them. Some of these ways may appear almost too minute and trifling for suggestion; but in practical experience, they are found to be influential in the accomplishment of the most desirable ends.

SECTION II.

INFANT SCHOOLS.

THE Infant School system *under the regulation of Christian discipline and instruction*, may be considered as one of the most valuable and successful experiments on the theory of Education. The endeavour to bend the twig some years sooner than it was used to be bent, has gained a considerable advantage over the dominion of darkness and error; an advantage however, which will turn against us, except the early excitement of intelligence is controlled and directed to the only right and Christian end. ‘The first seven years’ (as has been accurately observed) ‘are the seed-time of life’¹—only the two or three last years of which had hitherto been cultivated; while the earlier years had been lost to the child and to the world.

The importance of the Infant School system is beginning to be universally acknowledged. Yet it may be well to enumerate some of its specific advan-

¹ Manual for instruction of Infant Schools, by the Rev. W. Wilson, Walthamstow, p. 149.

tages, and to glance at some general principles on which it should be conducted. *The advantage of an Infant School as a part of the Parochial Ministry is considerable.* It is a nursery for the Sunday and Weekly School. Children taken from their own families cost much time and pains to restrain their undisciplined habits. But when the Infant School training is their door of entrance, habits of order and attention have already commenced. The drudgery of the alphabet also is in some degree passed through, which (in the Sunday School especially) interposes a serious hinderance to the immediate results of Christian instruction. *The advantages to parents (particularly mothers)* are of no small value; giving them time, quiet, ability to earn, and to do the work of the house; with the comfort of knowing that their children are safely and kindly provided for. The separation of children from their natural guardians (as likely to encourage negligence on the part of the mothers) has sometimes been urged as an objection against this system. This might be plausible, if most mothers exercised a Christian or parental discipline over their children. But observation of the poor proves, that their children are generally unrestrained, till the age of five or six (even in many cases where their mothers are able to attend to them); and that the habits acquired at school have bound the children to their parents by the early subordination, improvement, and cheerfulness of their tempers, the want of which is so fruitful a source of discord. *The advantage also to the children* is equally great—*negatively*, in their deliverance from filth, bad company, and mischief; and *positively*, in cleanliness, order, obedience, attraction to what is useful, formation of good habits, correction of bad tempers, real learning,

storing the mind with the elements of Scripture, early impressions of religion, &c. &c.

It is desirable to conduct Infant Schools, (in country parishes especially) with as much simplicity, and as little excitement, as possible. Great injury must be apprehended from bringing the children forward into notice. Show and expence are equally to be avoided. As little as possible should be taught that is useless. Amusement and play even in instruction are needful for infants; *but they may be carried too far.* ‘The idea of teaching every thing as play or entertainment,’ (as has been well remarked) even if the project could be accomplished, ‘would sacrifice the great moral benefits of education.’ For what interesting track of information could compensate for the loss of the important habits of application? The main object of the school (to which every other must be subordinate) is not to amuse but to instruct; to be instrumental in directing the mind to the word of God, as the standard of right and wrong, and as the guide to the knowledge of ourselves, of our present happiness, and of our eternal hopes. This design will admit of much variety of detail in the course of instruction, such as objects, pictures, conversation, narrative, reading, &c.—and in each of these departments the Scriptures open an abundant field for most diversified improvement. Nor is it at all correct to conclude, that the elementary principles of religion are beyond the intelligence of a child. For not to speak of their perfect simplicity—the light and dictates of conscience materially assist the comprehension.

In country parishes some of the children come or remain older at the school, than in large towns, where other weekly schools are ready to receive them. But

in all cases, as soon as the children are capable of it, useful employment (such as knitting and plating for boys, and sewing for girls) may be readily found; and Scripture stories or Scriptural knowledge be taught orally in the midst of these occupations.

In many respects several small schools are preferable to one large one. There is less display and excitement. Yet the difficulty of obtaining efficient superintendence usually presents a formidable hinderance to this plan. It is obvious how much depends upon this point—more perhaps than in any other school. True piety seems to be an indispensable requisite in the master or mistress. Combined with this, “aptness to teach,” decided fondness for children, quickness in marking their character and habits, and in gaining their affections, condescension to their amusements, good health, active habits, patience, kindness, correcting without passion, in the mildest mode, to effect the desired end—in the general system ruling by love not by fear. The kindness however of management must be moderated by discipline; or it will tend rather to foster a softness of character than a solid and strengthened habit of mind.

Should want of funds, room, co-operation, or other causes, prevent the regular Infant School system, much may be done by improving the Dame Schools already in existence. A little time given weekly to them, occasional supply of books, suggestions of improvement in their plan of instruction, some small addition made to the income of the mistress by sending a few children to the school; these trifling attempts might secure considerable influence, and be productive of much good. In all cases it is desirable that the children should make some payment, however inconsiderable.

In general however we observe, that unless Christian instruction and discipline be the governing principles of the system of Infant education, it must be viewed as a scheme of doubtful expediency; of uncertain prospect of usefulness, or even of probable and overbalancing evil.¹

SECTION III.

WEEKLY SCHOOLS.

On the subject of Weekly Schools, we can do little more than lay down general principles. Local circumstances must at once furnish and direct the detail. Much that is simple and easy in practice does not admit of description; and experience alone can determine its expediency. The National system of instruction is becoming more general, and needs not to be particularized. Many valuable subsidiary suggestions might, however, be added to it (the result of experiments upon the principles of education) for more local adaptation; so that in establishing or re-modelling a Weekly School, it will be highly desirable to improve all the helps that are afforded, and to inspect different experiments in actual progress and efficiency. The design of the Weekly School is to provide instruction for every child in the parish; though blessings freely offered are too often unduly slighted. In Village Schools, the variety of ages, and

¹ It is almost needless to refer to Rev. W. Wilson's admirable developement of the whole machinery in his 'System of Infant Schools,' and 'Manual of Instruction for Infant Schools.' Should the expensiveness of some of his plans be objected to (where the strictest economy was required); yet so many valuable hints may be gathered from his works, that the writer cannot forbear most strongly to recommend them.

the great difficulty of ensuring regular attendance, are more sensibly felt than in towns. Indeed the enforcement of attendance is in many cases scarcely just or expedient; as the absence of the children is occasioned often by their early training to agricultural work; the earnings of which are a necessary component part of their livelihood. Yet as the licence is frequently abused by indolence (either on the part of the children or parents), the inducement of some trifling reward to regular attendance at the end of the quarter, would prove a useful distinction between necessary and unnecessary absence. The children's payment of a penny (more or less) connected with this system of rewards, by giving a personal interest in the School, would contribute to ensure regularity. It is obvious, how much depends upon effective superintendence. Undoubted piety, firmness, judgment, regularity, alacrity, strict probity, and real love for the employment, are requisites, which every Minister would desire to see combined in the Master or Mistress of the Weekly School. They should gain the respect, in order to secure the obedience, of the children. Yet it is not desirable, that they should be vested with much discretionary power. The parents are better satisfied, when they are bound by a regular course marked out for them by authority. The assistance of visitors concurring with the rules of the School, and maintaining the regularity of all its minute arrangements, may be thankfully received. The value of rewards is of far less moment, than their just distribution; so that the children may be assured that they will be connected proportionably with their conduct and exertion. In punishments, certainty is much more to be considered than severity. In general, disgrace or forfeiture of reward, will supply the place

of corporal punishment; which at least ought not to be resorted to, until milder measures have been ineffectually tried. In the circulating classes, (a method first adopted in the Islington Schools) the circles gained by the children may be of a given value, and be periodically redeemed for books, or clothes, or other articles of reward—accurate registers being kept of the progress and conduct of the children. This system excites the natural impetus of advancement; while it possesses the high advantage of repressing *personal emulation*. The child's attention is not engaged in taking the place of another; but only in securing a place for himself. Each may exert himself to the utmost, and be rewarded accordingly. Eight or ten in the same class may receive the same reward, and in every respect be considered equal. On the former plan, the children were taught to consider the top place in the class as the highest station of honorary distinction, and the last place as the lowest point of degradation. But on this system, all places, considered *as places*, are alike honourable; and the movement is unlimited according to merit. The child is perpetually rising or retrograding. If attentive, he finds an unceasing motive to exertion and diligence; while even the dull are enlivened, in not standing at the bottom of the class in hopeless despondency.¹

It is very necessary for the keeping up the interest of the children, that their occupations should be varied, taking care, however, that the order of their employments should on no account be dispensed with. Equally necessary is it, that, as far as possible, they should be made to understand every thing which they learn or read. Plans should be adopted to ensure a system

¹ For a full description, see a small work published by John Stoat, Master of the Islington Parochial School. Rivingtons.

of minute questioning on all their lessons, under the vigilant superintendence of the Minister, or some delegated and competent inspector. The religious instruction however, constitutes the main power of the system ; without which, even under the most orderly regulations, it is a lifeless mechanism. This is far too important to be left to the Master. He may be competent for the official arrangements ; and yet, either from utter ignorance of religion, want of spiritual apprehensions, or intelligent and affectionate mode of communication, he may be wholly incapacitated for this primary course of instruction. To make it the employment of the first hour, may serve to impress the children's minds with a sense of its pre-eminent importance ; Catechism, Scripture, or Hymns, may be learnt by word of mouth from the teacher, before the other books are distributed ; and this plan (where it can be adopted) would spread an atmosphere over the whole subsequent course. So powerful a machinery as schools, requires in every part the control of the principles of the Gospel, to render them efficient to the desired ends.

SECTION IV.

THE TREATMENT OF THE YOUNG IN A HOPEFUL STATE OF IMPRESSION.

WITH the exception of special cases in the Visitation of the Sick, this may be considered as the most difficult part of the Pastoral office. No peculiar talent, originality, or Ministerial fluency, is requisite ; but the " spirit of power and of love," combined with " the spirit of a sound mind." ¹ These youthful

¹ 2 Tim. i. 7.

recipients of instruction are readily melted by the power of affectionate address ; while too often their conduct proves their consciences to be unawakened, and their hearts unimpressed. Their very susceptibility of religious impressions has a strong influence to foster self-deception ; mistaking mere natural impulse for the exercise of the spiritual life, conviction of sin for conversion of heart, feeling for principle, attachment to their Minister for love to their Saviour, interest in the mechanical form of instruction for interest in the Gospel. Hence the desire for comfort is often independent of any vigour or even principle of holiness, and connected with the debilitated exercise of spiritual affections. We must be equally careful therefore to instruct as to impress, and to strengthen the judgment with a tone of manly and intelligent seriousness, which may control any irregular exercise of the feelings. Much caution is also required, in placing Christian experience before them, for the purpose of conviction (lest, almost unconsciously, we form their character either to hypocrisy or self-delusion) ; much close personal application of the Gospel to their several cases is needed ; together with a clear separation between natural and spiritual excitement ; and a watchfulness against the subtle influence of all excitement, that does not distinctly act upon the conscience. Even the exhibition of the love of Christ should be set forth in its glory and sublimity, as well as in its inexpressible tenderness and endearment ; that, while the wax is warmed and softened by the lively glow of feeling, a deep, complete, and permanent impression may be made ; and the judgment, conscience, and habits may be powerfully influenced.

Not that we would deprecate that legitimate

excitement, which may often, under God, awaken the exercise of spiritual affections, producing, in their turn, a most important reaction. But let not the character or progress be measured by excitement. If it arise from the exercise of the feelings rather than from deep views of Scriptural truth, it is delusion—not edification. This impulse may move without *moulding* the heart. It may be the effect of sympathy, wrought upon by a kindly earnestness of address, or (as in the history of Joseph, or the sufferings of Christ) by the touching simplicity and tenderness of Divine truths, without any spiritual principle, perception, or practical influence. There may even be considerable influence upon the mind, conscience, and conversation, without the radical change of heart. The will—the sovereign power in the soul—though disturbed and restrained by the light of the mind and the working of the conscience—may still shew its natural bias to sin. There may also be a work of illumination without spiritual light, complacency, rest, or transformation.¹ The conscience may be awakened by natural conviction to a greater quickness and sensibility, without that penitent abhorrence of sin, that turns to the blood of Christ, that it might be “purged from dead works to serve the living God.”² The affections may be also touched, yet not fixed, nor filled with the things of God. The impression therefore is transient and uninfluential.³ The love of the world is not wholly thrust out; nor is its place filled with spiritual love and delight; so that, though “the house is swept and garnished” with much outward reformation, it is “empty” of Christ, and, being

¹ See Heb. vi. 4, 5.

² Ibid. ix. 14.

³ Hosea vi. 4. Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

not inlaid with saving grace, is ready for the re-entrance of Satan with more established power.¹

To be able to distinguish the true and hidden life of the Christian from amiable dispositions, social affections, and evangelical correctness of profession, is indeed a distinguishing gift of "the manifold grace of God." Spiritual principles as well as external duties, may be fearfully counterfeited;² and therefore their evidences must be carefully sifted, and tried much more by consistent conduct, than by the most intelligent and blameless profession. Even under decided symptoms of sincerity, watchfulness is most necessary to encourage a solid rather than a rapid progress. It is well even to *seem* to keep back the youthful converts, rather than by an indiscreet confidence to hazard a forward and doubtful profession. Let us indeed appear before them as the happy heralds of the Gospel. We have received a special commission respecting them, grounded upon the most endearing motives.³ We have messages to them of peculiar encouragement, and of generous and munificent love, sufficient to warrant the largest anticipation of lasting happiness.⁴ Yet still must we discourage confidence in a new excitement of interest and delight, irrespective of a spiritual apprehension of Christ, and of a believing, lowly, and consistent walk in him, and unaccompanied with an experimental acquaintance with themselves and their besetting temptations. Nor do we doubt, but that sincerity, instead of being cast down by this *apparent* (for it is only apparent) discouragement, will eventually be strengthened in a

¹ Matt. xii. 43—45. This is especially the case with the unconverted children of Christian parents.

² Such as Repentance, 1 Kings xxi. 27—29: Faith, Luke viii. 13. Acts viii. 13: Joy, Matt. xiii. 20. John v. 35.

³ John xxi. 15.

⁴ Such as Prov. viii. 17. Jer. iii. 4.

more self-suspecting scrutiny. The prevailing defect in the religion of young persons appears to be, that their views of the Saviour are too slightly connected with this self-inquiry, and therefore too feebly influential in deepening their humility, expanding their love, and promoting their Christian steadfastness and consistency. This retarding system, therefore, (so to call it,) will be of much service in separating the chaff from the wheat; disappointing a forward profession of its expected encouragement, whilst the germ of trembling sincerity is secretly cherished and preserved. Young trees, even of "the Lord's planting," require diligent care and watering: but by any attempt to force the fruit, the principle of life in the root may be materially injured. Indeed they cannot be *accurately distinguished*, until their budding and blossom have matured into fruit. Many a hard frost nips the bud; many an eastern blast threatens the blossom; and therefore the result of winter and spring can alone determine the life of the incorruptible seed in the root. A gradual, kindly warmth, without a too indulgent treatment, will be the most safe temperature for these tender plants in an unkindly soil.

SECTION V.

YOUNG MEN.

THE breaking in of "the wild asses' colt," demands extreme management, and not a little patience. The trite French proverb aptly applies to this case—'A drop of honey will catch more flies than a pint of vinegar.' All means—change of means—every effort, must be tried in succession, to discover what

treatment is most likely to produce effect. Kind and substantial expressions of interest in their employments—accessibility of manners and address—the improvement of apparently accidental opportunities of intercourse,—the use of books adapted as far as possible to their situation, and with a cast of seriousness more or less deepened according to circumstances—friendly advice upon their temporal concerns, chiefly offered in the way of suggestion, and with a careful guard against meddling interference—these and other plans, naturally arising out of our knowledge of their dispositions, and suited to their local habits, may possibly effect some good. And let it be remembered, that something must be done, or at least attempted, for them. They are in some respects the most important part of our flock; and in their day will form the great body of influence among us. While those who are brought under the power of the Gospel are our most powerful supports; those who are restrained neither by education, attachment, personal respect, nor religious principle, generally become (the Writer speaks from experience) the very pests of the parish. They have sometimes, by peculiar tact, prudence, and decision, been brought under a distinct course of instruction;¹ but in general their pride and self-

¹ A plan of engaging the interest of elder lads and young men, on the Sunday evenings, was tried in a large sphere with considerable success. All who could read well, were invited without limitation of age. The classes were divided with as much regard as possible to age; the Minister himself taking the first and largest class. About an hour was spent in repeating a portion of Scripture, which had been selected on the preceding Sunday, and which the teachers explained in the several classes, requiring the lads to bring their own parallels, as an evidence of their diligent study and interest. No compulsion however was used. The lessons were set before them as subjects of interest, rather than as task and duty. In the next division of time, the whole school was arranged before the Minister, who questioned, illustrated, and

will make even the most affectionate control intolerable, and often produce the most violent re-action. Our aim must be to preserve others (and especially the elder lads of our Sunday Schools) from their injurious society or example. And here we may, perhaps, avail ourselves of some of their popular institutions to subserve the purposes of a distinct Ministry to them. A way is sometimes opened for obtaining, if not an ascendancy, at least an important influence of restraint and confidence, in their Benefit Societies. Or we might organize a Society mainly upon their own principles under our immediate superintendence. The public fund, enriched with the ale-house money, would afford higher pecuniary advantage at the same ratio of payment. And this attraction held out to the considerate, would enable us to form their rules to a Christian standard, and to enforce decided regard to moral obligations, upon pain of severe penalties.¹ The line of demarcation would thus be drawn between the steady and the irregular; and, though the more fearful might hesitate to join a society bearing a peculiar stamp of reproach; yet, even in its slow progress towards general acceptance,

applied the subject which had been set before them in their classes; requiring an answer or Scripture proof, sometimes from a lad, sometimes from a class, sometimes from the whole school. A short sketch of Christian Biography, or serious address, was then given (unless, as was sometimes the case, the interest of the catechetical subject employed the whole time,) the subject for the ensuing Sunday was made known, and singing and prayer ended the evening. The attendance of the lads was regular and voluntary. A bond of union was cemented with their Minister and with each other. The power of restraint was extensively felt; and in many cases a Divine influence was manifested, with permanent and practical effect.

¹ Friendly Societies on Mr. Becher's system are well known. Interesting details of similar Societies, grounded upon different, though, it is presumed, not insecure principles, may be seen in *Richmond's Life*, pp. 116—130.

it will be attended with considerable indirect advantages. It may be made an interesting organ of Ministerial instruction, by the improvement of the monthly meetings for reading the Scriptures and for prayer: or by a regulation directing each member to bring his contribution of a text of Scripture, which, with the rest, might be recapitulated at the close of the business with personal application. Such an attempt to engraft, without formality, spiritual intercourse upon friendly advice, will be found by no means barren in profit or interest.¹

This Ministry is however often marked with peculiar discouragement. At the best we feel that we have their respect, not their confidence. In other instances, we are almost ready to decide that the means used only increase the evil; and that it is better for both parties, that we should maintain a degree of reserve and distance, labouring at the same time with more intensity to spread their case before the Lord. Yet under these trying circumstances, this Ministry should bear the stamp of peculiar tenderness—the “nursing-mother cherishing her children.”² We must guard against a feeling of our own spirit, when they turn their backs upon our repeated admonitions.³ While we “rebuke them sharply,” we must “instruct them in meekness;” and let the “peradventure, that God

¹ For an interesting plan of ‘young men associated’ upon Christian principles, see Cotton Mather’s *Essays to do Good*, pp. 92—96. and Dr. Woodward’s account of the rise and progress of Religious Societies, chap. ii. iii. One of the excellent rules in the Societies thus memorialized by Dr. Woodward was, that each member should endeavour to bring at least one other into their Christian fellowship,—a resolution which, in many instances, was honoured with the Divine blessing.

² 1 Thess. ii. 7.

³ ‘*Quicquid lacerato animo dixeris, punientis est impetus, non charitas corrigen- tis.*’ August. in Gal. vi.

will give them repentance,"¹ exclude despondency. Successive disappointments must exercise faith, deepen humiliation, quicken our prayers, increase our anxieties—not induce a sullen, indolent heartlessness. We have a solemn responsibility on their account; nor must we readily venture to cast them off, as "the dogs and the swine," who stand excluded from our commission.² However humbling may be our want of sensible encouragement, our rule must be—'Sow in faith, and have long patience: wait on and for the Lord.' Fruit will be found under the most unpromising appearances; but we must expect to wait for it. "The "patience of hope" is the preparation for the "assurance of hope." "Through faith and patience we shall inherit the promise."

Another point of great moment in this department of our Ministry, regards our watchfulness over those connexions, which young persons with a religious profession often incautiously form. The power to throw in a word of seasonable warning, before the die is cast, on which perhaps depends eternity, is among the many advantages of confidential intercourse. The havoc which Satan has ever made in the church, through such fatal unions, is beyond all calculation. How many hopeful blossoms have been withered! How many apparently promising converts, thus sifted, have proved but chaff! How many sincere, but hesitating, Christians have been shaken by *the infatuated* attempt to unite "the temple of God with idols!" And yet to choose the moment, and to discover the safe extent, of interference; and for this purpose to combine the influence of confidence, and the knowledge

¹ Tit. i. 13. with 2 Tim. ii. 25.

² See Matt. vii. 6.

of character and circumstances acquired from that source, demands extreme delicacy, tenderness, and prudence. Indeed, there is no department of the Pastoral Ministry of the young, which requires more anxious consideration, than the developement of the sophistries and self-indulgent delusions, arising out of their temptations, and the application of the touch-stone of the Gospel requisitions, to animate or restore the spiritual system. Those instances, in which the wise counsels of a faithful Pastor are blessed in such a crisis, he will reckon among the most prominent tokens of Divine assistance; and in cases of failure, he may still reap much advantage to himself, in a deeper insight into the devices of Satan and the self-deceit of the human heart.

SECTION VI.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ON CONFIRMATION.¹

THIS subject is a most important part of the Ministry of the young, and one that brings with it peculiar encouragements, anxieties, and responsibilities. Never perhaps are the affectionate yearnings of the faithful Pastor more drawn out towards his beloved flock, than at the season of Confirmation. Then, if ever, he is prepared to meet them with the Apostle's expression of parental interest—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you."² The rite of Confirmation, if not of express Apostolical origin, was at least derived from Apostolical practice.

¹ The substance of this section appeared in the *Christian Observer*, February and March, 1829.

² Gal. iv. 19.

We cannot indeed identify it with that imposition of hands,¹ which appears to have been invariably followed with miraculous influence; but the concurrent testimonies of the earliest fathers and councils afford strong presumptive evidence, that it was the continuance of this rite, as an ordinary means of spiritual edification, and for a purpose and objects somewhat varied from its original institution.² Calvin admits it to have been the custom of the ancient church, and wishes that it had been preserved in its simplicity in his own church, before the Papal heresy unduly exalted it into a sacrament.³ The ancient church of the Waldenses retained the substance of it as an Apostolical institution.⁴ The most eminent lights of the Reformed Churches (Peter Martyr, Rivet, Peter des Moulin, &c.) give it the weight of their

¹ Acts viii. 17. xix. 6.

² The authorities may be seen in Wheatly and Comber. The chief of them are referred to by the Rev. B. Woodd and the Rev. D. Wilson, in their valuable tracts on the subject. Comp. Bishop Hall's *Polem. Works*, vol. ix; and an excellent treatise lately published by the Rev. T. H. Kingdon. Dr. Hammond's *View of the Directory*, and Calvin's *Institutes*, (referred to in *Christian Observer*, 1829, pp. 71, 72, 143, 144,) will give some important views upon the subject, from very opposite schools of divinity. A scarce, but satisfactory treatise, by Jonathan Hanmer (1658), besides referring to the ancient authorities, gives the approving judgment of Baxter, Calamy, Venning, and others of the Puritan Divines, on Confirmation. Archbishop Leighton strongly recommended to his clergy the substance of the rite of Confirmation; though the turbulent spirit of his times did not allow him to introduce the ceremony. *Works*, ii. 450. It is difficult to conjecture any reasonable objection to the rite of imposition of hands—consecrated as it is by the frequent usage of the Old Testament Church, by the example of our Lord; and being (as Calvin remarks) 'the ordinary rite among the Jews, in commending any one to the blessing of God.' *Calv. in Acts* xiii. 3.

³ *Calv. Instit. lib. iv. cap. xix. 4, 13*, and on *Heb. vi. 2*; which text he conceives fully sufficient to prove the Apostolical origin of the present institution. Chrysostom expounds the passage to the same purport.

⁴ See their confessions and Apologies, quoted in *Hanmer's Exercitation. pp. 37—40.*

authority. The Bohemian and Lutheran Churches allow the ordinance; which indeed is (as Archbishop Secker has observed) ‘of such acknowledged usefulness, that in the times of confusion, when Bishops were rejected, some of their adversaries took upon them to perform this part of their function; and within these few years (1741) the Church of Geneva hath restored it in the best manner their form of church government will admit, and added an office for it to their Liturgy.’¹

The intent of this rite is sufficiently obvious, as the complement and seal of infant baptism. In that ordinance the profession of the child’s faith, requisite for the act of covenanting with God, had been made by a surety. In laying claim therefore to the personal benefit of the Christian covenant, there must be a credible personal profession of the terms of that covenant. The sponsorial profession was sufficient for the infant covenant; but for a personal covenant a personal profession is indispensable; and without it, the infant title to Church privileges must be considered, in the case of an adult, to be invalidated. In the covenant of baptism, the infant was passive; and indeed was received into the Church, not on its own account; but having, as a part of its parent, a covenant interest in the promises to the seed of believers.² But, in the adult covenant, personal obligations are involved, and personal graces called into exercise; and hence arises the necessity of a personal profession, as a visible investiture into the

¹ Secker’s Charges, p. 52. The professors of Theology at Leyden, having with Calvin expressed their wishes for its restoration in the Church, add—‘*Cujus substantia in Ecclesiis nostris religiose servatur.*’—Synopsis Purioris Theologiæ, Lugd. 1625. Disput. xlvii. sect. 13. a work deservedly of high estimation. Compare also Baxter’s Infant’s Church Membership.

² See Gen. xvii. 7—10. Deut. xxix. 10—12. Acts ii. 39.

Church privileges of the covenant. The profession made at the Eucharist by no means answers this design; being connected with high privileges, consequent upon the validity of his title, as a complete member of the visible church.

It is plain that the Church has a right to demand such a confession as is exhibited at confirmation. She cannot judge of what she does not know. She does not pretend to be a searcher of hearts. She can only therefore determine by outward signs. The Apostles even hesitated to receive Saul into their company, (though with the strongest evidence of sincerity) until the church had received a voucher of the credibility of his profession.¹ If the necessity of this profession be disallowed, what hinders the infidel or the heathen from advancing a claim, on the ground of his infant baptism, to the full privileges of the church, and the church herself from being thus virtually unchurched? Every church, therefore, practising infant baptism, insists upon a confession of faith, as an indispensable requisite for full communion with the visible body; and, this being admitted, we feel warranted to decide, without any unkind feelings to those who may conscientiously differ from us, that the profession of confirmation is more conformable to the practice of the Apostolical churches, and the custom of the primitive ages, than any that prevails. It is indeed, in its intent, similar to the profession of adult baptism—"the answer of a good conscience towards God;"² in which the grace that had been faithfully prayed for in baptism is publicly acknowledged, and its increase sought and expected by the renewed application of the same faith.

¹ Acts ix. 26, 27.

² 1 Pet. iii. 21.

We need scarcely add, that the character of this engagement is distinctly spiritual. What else shall we say to the whole tenor of the covenant between God and the infant, in the baptismal service? How shall we denominate the preface, question and answer, and the prayer in the Confirmation service? Are they not eminently spiritual? Is—"I do" *renew the solemn promise*—any thing less than a purpose of the heart? Can that be solemn which is mere lip-profession? Our church regards the confirmed as ready for the communion; but does she not insist upon spiritual qualifications for the reception of that holy sacrament?¹ Consider our spiritual catechism on the one side, and our peculiarly spiritual Communion Service on the other; and we cannot surely make the intermediate Service of Confirmation to be of a different or less spiritual mould.

As the preliminary however for a course of Ministerial instruction upon this important subject, the debasing rubbish of superstition and ignorance must be cleared away. Most parochial Ministers, in the course of catechetical inquiry, have elicited from their catechumens notions, which, had not familiar intercourse brought them to light, might have been deemed traditionary relics of the dark ages. Some will come for the bishop's blessing, with no idea, desire, or expectation of the blessing of God—others, to relieve their sponsors of the burden of their sins and duties; as if personal responsibility were not coeval with the earliest period of "discernment between our right hand and our left hand;" or as if we, who are utterly unable to answer for ourselves, could answer for one another; or as if any one could be found to answer for one of us,

¹ Compare the answer to the last question in the Catechism.

but Him, "who his own self bore our sins on his own body on the tree." The candidate for Confirmation in the true spirit of the rite, will come in self-renunciation and faith—not to take his sins upon himself, but hoping for the pardon of them through Christ; and, in the simple devotedness of a pardoned and accepted sinner, taking his yoke upon him as his daily privilege and service. With the more enlightened, who yet are ignorant of the spiritual requisitions of the service of God, errors are prevalent, less palpably absurd, but scarcely less dangerous. It is often expected to operate as a charm, to make the Christian path from henceforth more easy. Resolutions are connected with the ordinance itself, with more or less of sincerity, but the natural fruit of ignorance and self-deception. From that day a new era will begin; a more serious course of life will be commenced; the world, if not wholly forsaken, will be restrained within more measured limits. And all this is anticipated without any distinct feeling of helplessness, perception of the need of a change of heart, or dependence on Divine grace. They are soon however reminded that the difficulty must remain in full force, while the heart continues unchanged; that the world will be as ensnaring, Satan as tempting, and sin as powerful after Confirmation as before; that, if there is not at the present moment a sincere and humble desire of self-dedication to God, the day and service of Confirmation possess no innate power to give a new bias to the heart.

But we have also to contend with the gross misconceptions of parents respecting Confirmation. It is with them a respectable church form, with no meaning, and linked with no obligations. Their children are come to a proper age. It is right that

they should receive the sacrament—fit or unfit; and therefore, as a preliminary, it is decent that they should be confirmed; that is, that they should solemnly promise, in the presence and in the house of God, what they have no desire or intention to perform; and the performance of which, in many cases, would be in direct opposition to their parent's wishes, instructions, and example. It is impossible not to be affected with the rash heedlessness (not to speak of the profane trifling) of parents; thus encouraging their children in the profession of a wilful falsehood; and striking a blow at the root of all moral obligations, Christian integrity, and even common honesty.

The course of instruction upon the subject of Confirmation would naturally include a clear exposition of the nature and obligation of the baptismal vow. Every professing Christian is as strictly bound by the constraint of this vow, as if he had made it in his own person. It was made on his account; from a regard to his best interests; and upon the consideration, that he could not be brought too early into covenant with God, and into fellowship with Christ. As therefore his baptismal obligation bound him only for his good in the way of privilege; and to nothing in the way of duty, to which his relation to God had not previously bound him from his first moment of accountableness; he has every reason, when come to competent understanding, to set his own hand to it. He comes therefore now in Confirmation, to affix his seal to his infant baptism by his own act and deed; and to dedicate himself to God in that engagement, in which he had been dedicated to him in infancy. He now makes the declaration, not of what he wishes to do, but of what he does; not of what he would be,

but of what he is. The grace that is prayed for at this ordinance, is, not that he may be able to devote himself to God; but that, having devoted himself, and now making the profession of it, he may be enabled to maintain his course to the end. Indeed, upon the ground of the faith that was professed in his baptism, he has already called himself "a member of Christ," and has acknowledged his obligations to God, "who *hath called* him unto this state of salvation." He is now come to confess before the church his humble and sincere readiness, according to the terms of the baptismal covenant, to renounce the service of his spiritual enemies; to accept the Gospel as his hope of salvation; and to determine by God's help, sought and obtained in earnest prayer, to continue in the way of God to his life's end. Upon the ground of this credible profession, the Bishop, as the Minister of God, lays his hands upon him, with prayer, as the sign of the Holy Spirit already vouchsafed, and as an encouraging assurance, on God's behalf, of its confirmation and increase.

This we apprehend to be the meaning of the rite, upon the supposition of the sincerity of the confirmant. But we cannot shut our eyes to the lamentable fact, that a vast majority of those, who offer themselves as candidates for Confirmation, are alike ignorant of its nature, and unimpressed with its obligations. Various motives may operate. Some remember the profane merriment of the last occasion; and are willing to have their holiday, like others, in the mockery of the service of God. Some think to please their parents by this blind profanation; forgetting, how little able their parents will be to shelter them from the awful consequence of their wilful falsehood; and that the plea of parental obligation will be of no avail, when

the heavy indictment appears against them at the bar of their Judge. Some think with their parents, that confirmation is proper for every young person, and that it is a reproach not to be confirmed; and therefore, though they have no more intention of leaving the world for Christ, than of quitting their country for a foreign land, they have no objection to the mere ceremony of a promise; and, for decency's sake, they wish to be confirmed.

Now it is plain, that for young persons under these or similar misconceptions, a customary course of pulpit Ministry would be inefficient. They need the simplest elementary instruction, conveyed to their minds in an interesting and arresting form.¹ They need to be awakened from their state of ignorance or carelessness, in order to be informed and encouraged. They require a close as well as a familiar and affectionate address; an adaptation of the general outline of instruction, (such as the detail of the baptismal vow) to their several tempers, habits, pleasures, temptations, and general conduct.² Frequent inquiry into their intelligent and experimental apprehension of truth, will be important. Texts, or short courses of reading, might be marked with advantage for their private meditation; and as subjects for examination of their state and progress in religious knowledge—such as brief statements of the fundamental doctrines, practical exhibitions of Christian duty, affecting views of the Saviour's love, portions for prayer, and encouraging

¹ The Writer cannot forbear to recommend a short Catechism on Confirmation, by Rev. J. Bickersteth, (Seeleys) as a valuable help to the parochial Minister.

² Bishop Butler insists upon personal conference, as an indispensable part of preparation for confirmation. See his Charge to the Diocese of Durham, Works, ii. 422. Comp. also Bishop Wilson's Parochialia. Works, iv. 16—34. Bishop of Winchester's Charge, p. 39.

illustrations of the character and happiness of devotedness to God.¹ A tender seriousness of address is the most effective medium of enforcing the constraining motives of the Gospel, combined with strong remonstrances upon the reasonableness of the service of God, and upon the ingratitude and rebellion of resisting the convictions of his love. 'Can you'—we might say to them—'hesitate to give your hearts to such a Saviour? How ungrateful, how inexcusable, this reluctance to so blessed a service! Had he been as reluctant to die for you, as you are to live for him, he would never have emptied himself of his heavenly glory for your sakes. Think of the Son of God becoming a man of sorrows for you: and can you turn away from his command of love—"My son, give me thine heart?"'

The course, however, of private communication with catechumens, can only be sketched in its broad prin-

¹ Take an example from the interesting memoir of Rev. J. Escreet,—'Mr. E. was excited to labour as much as possible to prepare his young parishioners for the ordinance, to which they were invited. He employed much time and labour in explaining the institution, expounding suitable passages of Scripture, and impressing upon their minds the spirit, and temper, and disposition, which they should cultivate. He addressed to them a series of discourses upon the subject, pointing out, from 1 Sam. iii. 27, the blessedness of an early devotion to God; from Josh. xxiv. 15, the duty of choosing God's service; from 1 Pet. v. 8, the importance of resisting our great adversary; and from Heb. vi. 2, the grounds and utility of the institution, by the effect produced on the minds of the confirmed, and on the minds of others.' Again: 'Mr. Escreet earnestly called upon his young people, seriously to consider the nature of the ordinance, and carefully to examine themselves; to sit down and count the cost; to remember their obligations to Almighty God, that they must either serve him, their rightful Lord and Master, or join themselves to his enemies; and that therefore it was their true interest, as well as their bounden duty, to devote themselves entirely to God's service; and to pour out their souls in fervent prayers, that he would accept the sacrifice, and receive and keep them for his own.'

ciples; the shaping of it into a more distinct and applicatory form will vary, more or less, in every instance. We come into contact with minds naturally cast into different moulds, or minds similarly constructed, but passing before us in different stages of ignorance or of inquiry, of resistance or of yielding to the constraining influence of Evangelical motives. Upon an extended scale, where it would be nearly impracticable to insulate each particular case, perhaps classes might be formed with advantage, after short individual converse, and thus the familiar mode of instruction be, in a great measure at least, retained.¹

Considerable difficulty indeed, has been felt by some of our brethren, in ascertaining the precise qualification intended by the church for this holy, but, alas! too often profaned rite. The language of the sixty-first canon is express—that we are to take especial care that none be presented, but such as we know are fit.² Now, if this canon be explained according to

¹ This appears to have been the system pursued by Mr. Robinson of Leicester, in his extensive sphere. His 'confirmation season' (his biographer informs us) 'was one he particularly valued, and had reason to esteem as his choicest seed-time. He prepared his congregation for it by sermons; he collected the young people, arranged their names, insisted upon their regular attendance, as a condition of giving them a certificate, and addressed a sort of family lecture to them on the Church Catechism, which he accompanied with solemn and earnest prayer, during five or six weeks before the bishop appeared. In this interval he would talk with some of them familiarly, but seriously, in small parties; with some separately in his study; to all he made a present of his excellent little tract on the subject: to all he gave special and appropriate exhortations from the pulpit; to all he showed himself the faithful shepherd, leading his flock with great solemnity on the morning of the service, praying, exhorting, and at length presenting them, with his own hands to his superior, and to his superior's Lord.' Life, pp. 335, 336.

² Thus Abp. Secker gives the spirit, not the letter of the canon, (Charges, p. 55.) The words of the canon are, 'that none shall be presented to the bishop, for him to lay his hands upon, but such as can render an account of their faith, according to

the letter of the mandate to the sponsor in the baptismal service, the fitness for confirmation would seem only to imply an acquaintance with the Catechism, and the benefit (*whether influential or not*) of instruction in its fundamental principles; including every species of the ungodly, who could readily attain this requisite, while living in the habitual indulgence of wilful and flagrant sin. But that our church, in requiring an account of the candidate's faith,¹ combined with a capacity to 'answer to the questions of the Catechism,'² a right sense of the meaning of the baptismal obligation, and a sincere intention to perform it, is sufficiently evident, both from the fearful profanation, which must result from a mere adherence to the letter of the mandate, and from the recorded sentiments of some of her most accredited authorities. 'I must entreat you,' (as Secker charged his clergy) 'to endeavour, that none be brought, but those who,' (to speak in the language of the Rubric,) 'are come to years of discretion,' who have learned, not the words only, but in a competent degree, the meaning of what was promised for them in baptism; who can say with *seriousness and truth*, (*what surely else they ought not to say at all,*) that 'in the presence of God and the congregation, they ratify and confirm the same in their own persons.'³ Bishop Burnet speaks most plainly and admirably to the same point.³

Nothing can be more satisfactory than this con-

the catechism in the said book contained.' The rubric in the Catechisms respecting Confirmation, more accords with the *letter* of the archbishop's words, and probably was in his mind—'All such as *he shall think fit* to be presented to the bishop to be confirmed.'

¹ See the words of the canon quoted above.

² Preface to Confirmation Service, and rubric appended to the Catechism.

³ Secker's Charges, p. 53. Pastoral Care, ch. viii.

current judgment of two of the authorized guardians of our church, deservedly of great name among us. It needs only be added, that the compliance with the letter of the mandate, in a large majority of instances, gives plausible ground to the objections of Dissenters ; is utterly inconsistent with the spiritual character of our church, and the spiritual engagements she requires from her members ; and reduces the ordinance of Confirmation to an empty ceremony, productive of no possible benefit to the persons confirmed, and bearing only the stamp of wilful falsehood, and solemn mockery, insulting to the presence and house of a holy, jealous God.

The difficulty however that is often and painfully felt, of complying with what has been usually considered the requisition of the church, will be materially diminished, by a decided course of applicatory instruction. The result of an experiment made of this system was most affecting. At the commencement of the course, all the catechumens were constant in their attendance ; but, as the subject gradually approached into closer contact with their consciences, and was brought closer still by individual inquiry and grappling remonstrances, the numbers gradually diminished, (as in Gideon's army, though indeed not in the same fearful proportion,) until they had dwindled down to one half of their original number. The "mixed multitude" soon began to find the gate too strait, and the way too narrow, for their pleasures, self-indulgence, and habits of sin, and retired from the course. They found that they had altogether mistaken the matter, and that, what they had conceived to be only a decent form, or perhaps a day of mirth, involved a profession, which, in common honesty they dared not make, and obligations, which

they had neither desire nor purpose to bind upon their consciences. And though they were repeatedly warned, that the declining of the public profession still left the obligations of the baptismal vow in their full force; yet they had not the hardihood to venture upon the solemn aggravation of hypocrisy in the profession, without any possible benefit to be expected from it. They were often indeed assured of the earnest desire of their Minister for their confirmation; while he felt it most incumbent upon him to explain to them its real nature—as the ratification, ‘with their own mouth *and consent*, openly before the church,’ of their baptismal engagement of renunciation, faith, and obedience. ● If they were willing ‘to confirm this promise in their own persons,’ it was equally his duty and privilege to encourage them. But if they were in *heart and life* unwilling, would they dare to present themselves to the bishop with a falsehood in their mouths; the guilt of which would be in no degree diminished by the awful fact of a multitude uniting with them in it; but rather would be aggravated by every circumstance of the occasion, by the light and knowledge which made it wilful, and by the presence of God in his own house, with the Minister and representatives of his church? This mode of direct dealing with their consciences would need little exercise of our Ministerial prerogative. Their drawing back would be their own act and deed—not that we forbid them; but that they will decline. We admit indeed the imputation of discouraging their wishes and intentions; but the responsibility of declining the profession will be entirely their own.

It is obvious, that the tone of this system would be widely different, not only with the more encouraging

cases, but also, wherever the first marks of discouragement began to exhibit a more hopeful aspect. Many doubtless at this important season, will call us closely to tread in our beloved Master's steps, in his merciful tenderness to "the bruised reed and the smoking flax." But with the careless, the more respectable (still remaining either unintelligent or unimpressed) and even with many of the doubtful, this system may be pursued in perfect consistency with Ministerial tenderness, though not indeed, (in some instances more especially,) without some conflict with our personal feelings, and probably some taking up of a Ministerial cross. It is important in all cases to hold out the language of invitation to the last stage of inquiry, lest we seem to prescribe limits to the grace of God, and hinder, as far as men can do, the operation of his own work, by want of conciliation, patience, and love.

The difficulties in the right treatment of Confirmation are exceedingly great. They begin in our own bosoms; they belong to the various motives operating in the minds of catechumens, their different states of mind, the conflicting opinions in our parishes, especially among Dissenters, and the differences perhaps of sentiment among our own brethren; and even, if none of these things embarrass us, there is the pain of possibly dismissing any, that may possess the latent germ of true piety; and of admitting *neutrals*—those of whose cases we can form no decided judgment. Truly it is a season calling for special prayer; that power and wisdom may be given to us to lay bare the heart of the candidate to his own eyes; and that, seeing our path clearly, we may with satisfaction to ourselves, and conviction to those concerned, make our decision.

The proper age for Confirmation has been variously determined. In England, during the reign of Popery, children were usually confirmed at five years of age. The Council of Trent appointed the time between seven and twelve years. Another council at Milan forbade the confirming of any under seven. The consistency of this requisition with the true genius of Popery is evident. It was, like their six other sacraments, an *opus operatum* upon passive agents. Calvin determined the age of ten, an age usually far too young for intelligent sincerity or profession. Our church has more wisely marked the time indefinitely—‘come to the years of discretion,’—an era, which must vary in some degree according to natural capacity, opportunities of instruction and preparation for a suitable and beneficial participation of this holy rite. Few young persons reach this era before the age of thirteen, and not many so early.

We must deeply regret, that instances of Ministerial unfaithfulness should give plausible pretext for the misconceptions of Dissenters, as to the nature and value of this ordinance; but that “eye” must “be evil” indeed, that cannot distinguish between a rite, diligently improved as a vehicle of important instruction and personal conviction, and the same rite left to its own nakedness, unconnected with Christian instruction or Christian motives; and therefore *from Ministerial neglect*, and *not from unscriptural superstition*, made an occasion of affronting mockery to God under the shadow of a reasonable and acceptable service. Is there no difference between a promiscuous multitude, gathered—like the assembly at Ephesus, “the more part of whom knew not wherefore they were come together”¹—and between a “little flock,” duly

¹ Acts xix. 32.

instructed in the nature of their obligations; and coming to the house of God to testify their public and willing surrender to the service of their Saviour? Methinks candour would forbear to condemn, where it could not wholly accord; and Christian simplicity and love would forgive the mode in the approval of the end, and would be ready to say—"The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord."²

We may add a suggestion on the importance of keeping alive the impressions of the season of Confirmation in our subsequent Ministry. Much of the anticipated blessing has often been lost from the neglect of "stirring up the minds" of the confirmants, from time to time, "by way of remembrance." Would it not be desirable occasionally to make them the objects of our pulpit addresses; to press home inquiries more closely in private conference as to their maintenance of Christian sincerity; and to assemble them periodically for the purpose of a renewed, systematic, and self-examining exhortation, to an habitual and consistent fulfilment of these obligations?

As a mere ceremony, nothing can be more unmeaning, or, we may say, more profane, than Confirmation. As an ordinance, seriously considered, and conscientiously improved, it will never fail to open successively important eras in our parochial Ministry; in which the labour of the devoted Minister is sealed with special tokens of Divine acceptance. Not, indeed, that we could in any case regret the extraordinary efforts of the season; for, even if not a single instance of a visible blessing had been vouchsafed, yet the oppor-

¹ Psalm cxxix. 8.

tunities then specially afforded, of exciting a spirit of prayer for the rising generation ; of bringing the grace and mercy of the Saviour into more immediate contact with their understandings and affections ; and of detailing before them a more explicit exhibition of their solemn and unchangeable obligations ; cannot be wholly unproductive of a blessing to our own hearts ; and may be confidently expected to produce an ultimate and abundant harvest in many unpromising cases.

A memorandum book to enter minutes of conversation with candidates for confirmation would afford many useful and interesting recollections.—The following may furnish a sample :—

The approach of A. B. to Confirmation, gave me, from the beginning, unmixed uneasiness. My conversations with him, from time to time, on the subject, elicited no satisfactory evidences of true penitence. The character and habit of his mind was decidedly, though not grossly, worldly ; and therefore the profession of renunciation of the world in entireness and sincerity was the main point of examination, and the specific application of the baptismal vow to his individual case. He professed increased seriousness of mind, and a readiness to give more consideration than hitherto to the subject of religion ; but the intention of buying “the pearl of great price,” at the cost of “selling all that he had,” I fear, had never found a place in his heart. I entered into the subject with him in close conversation, entreaty, and prayer. ‘Are you willing to stand to this profession, to renounce all that this world offers for Christ?’ He was afraid—not all : he was willing to give up some things, but he could not say more. I told him that some, and not all, meant nothing :

that where there was not a readiness to forsake all, it was more than doubtful, whether there was a real desire and sincere intention to yield any thing ; as that "faith," which alone could enable him *cheerfully* to make one sacrifice for Christ, was "the victory that overcometh the world," in every form of temptation in which it could present itself. I should have spoken to him in a different tone, making allowance for hesitation and conflict in his mind, had I felt any reason for hope that the germ of Christian sincerity, even in its weakest influence, was hid in the ground of his heart. But I had no competent satisfaction or encouragement on this point. He hoped that he might be of a different mind some future day ; but at present he was not prepared to come up to the requisitions of the Gospel. The gate was too strait, and the way too narrow : he had not counted the cost ; or, if he had, he was not prepared to abide it. His faint resolutions derived all their strength from his own resources ; and were little, if at all, connected with a sense of helplessness, and dependence upon strength from above. It was therefore easy to determine their character, and the certainty of their failure.

Another case (slightly varying in its character and mode of treatment, though with the same melancholy issue) was that of C. D. a wild and careless lad, whose mind had hitherto been undisturbed with the most cursory thought of religion. The world was every thing with him ; all his care, all his employ, all his delight. Eternity, with its infinitely momentous stake, had been wholly disregarded. Confirmation, in his view, was a thing of course. Several of his family had gone to the last Confirmation ; and he was old enough for the present ; and the repetition of his

catechism was all that he conceived would be required. I endeavoured to impress serious conviction upon his conscience; but could only obtain a promise, that he would turn the matter over in his mind. Some slight impressions however were made by repeated conversations. As the time drew near, I endeavoured to bring his mind to a crisis. He told me, that he was willing to be confirmed; to which I replied—'I am glad to hear it, if it be really true that you wish to confirm your baptismal vow, and really to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. But you must understand the meaning and seriousness of this determination. Confirmation is a promise you are going to make—or rather to renew—to God. You are going to promise great things,—things, which, if you perform them, will make the world wonder. You are going to promise the great, holy, heart-searching God, that you will, from this time forth, for ever renounce, forsake, and abhor the devil and all his works; sin of every kind, of every degree, whatever your conscience tells you to be wrong; and that you will resist with all your might whatever temptations have hitherto overcome you. These are great things for you to promise.' 'I doubt,' (said he) 'I am not fit: I had rather not go.' Not at present taking notice of his hesitation, I proceeded—'You are in the world from morning to night; Satan puts every temptation in your way—sin, the neglect of God, the neglect of his word and prayer; your companions draw you as far as they can from every serious thought about your soul, your Saviour, or eternity. Now you are going to promise, that, when you meet them to-morrow, you will strive against them as far as you can; and, if they will not hear you, that you will turn away from them. This is a

part of the meaning of Confirmation. Is this your meaning?' 'I think,' (said he) 'I had better not go.' 'I do not wholly discourage you from going. If you can go without telling a falsehood, it will be a blessing to you. But to profess and promise to God in his own house what you do not mean to perform, would be the most wicked falsehood you could utter. Did you know that it meant all this?' 'Nothing near so much.' 'Now' (said I) 'I do not wish to frighten you, but it is so dreadful to go blind-folded, and ignorant of the promise you are about to make. In your business you never promise in this thoughtless way; and this is by far the most serious business you ever took in hand.' 'Yes indeed, I begin to see it is; and I think I had better give it up.' 'I do not recommend you to give it up to-night. You have not yet asked God to teach you. He is waiting for the first turn of your heart to him, if you will but seek him. Let me show you in the parable of the prodigal a picture of God's love and readiness to welcome you.' He listened with considerable attention, and at length said—'I should like to go; but I think I had better not, if I am not fit.' 'I think so. Only remember, that unfitness for Confirmation is unfitness for death. And how awful to be called into eternity in this state of unfitness! How awful to be growing more unfit every day by neglecting these things! Do not despise this precious gift. It is worth all that you have in the world—it is the pearl of great price—worth ten thousand worlds, if you had them to buy it.' 'Yes, but it is such a very strict thing.' 'And you must expect to find it so. You never can be religious without a hard struggle. Could you bear what the world will say? to have all your old companions joining the laugh

young persons, immediately after Confirmation, are hurried to the Lord's table; as if all scrutiny of the sincerity of their profession, and all intelligent preparation for that solemn ordinance, might readily be dispensed with. Where their consciences are not benumbed in formality or indifference, this rash decision of treatment has usually issued in a heartless profession of religion, characterized by indolent un-availing regret. Not indeed that we would wilfully err on the other extreme, and expect *every thing to be quite satisfactory*—"We wish their perfection," but we must not wait for it; nor should we debar them in almost the lowest gradation of sincerity (for what more than sincerity had the Apostles at the original institution of the ordinance?) from an ordinance, which, by fixing them in communion with the Christian church, is most helpful to their establishment in the profession of the Gospel.¹

CHAPTER V.

SACRAMENTAL INSTRUCTION.

THE dispensation of the Sacraments must be considered as one of the most important parts of our Ministry. The blessings of the Gospel, which in the preaching of the Gospel are promiscuously offered to believers, are here sealed to each severally by a personal

¹ The admission of the young, of a satisfactory character, to the Lord's table is sanctioned by many eminent Ministers. Most interesting details will be found in Philip Henry's *Life*, pp. 11, 84, 195. Comp. also Scott's *Life*, pp. 619, 620. For their especial use the Writer ventures to recommend a *Catechism* by Rev. J. Bickersteth, as eminently simple, intelligent, and spiritual.

distribution. The Sacraments may therefore be truly called the visible word ; as representing to our eyes by visible signs, what in the word is spoken to our ears. They are therefore a most useful confirmation of our faith, as the seal and word of God, that in the exercise of faith we shall as surely be partakers of Christ, and of all the benefits of the covenant, as we are of its outward signs. The definition of Sacrament may therefore be taken generally—"the seal of the righteousness of faith."¹ What a sacredness does this view give to their authority ! that nothing should be added to them, or taken from them ! What less than treason would it be to alter without authority the royal seal ? And to violate the integrity of the Christian Sacraments is no other than the defilement of which God complains in Israel—"the setting up of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts."² The mode, decency, order, and circumstantialia of their celebration, the church justly claims the liberty to prescribe within the limits, and agreeably to the spirit of the Apostolic rules ;³ preserving at the same time most carefully the substance and form of the elements, and the representation of the blessings shadowed forth by them.

Yet in the administration of the Sacraments, how often are parochial Ministers conversant with the errors of Popery without the name ! How much has their real nature and efficacy been obscured by the veil of ignorance or misconception ! Specific instruction therefore upon their spiritual character, privileges, and obligations, is of the utmost importance.

¹ Rom. iv. 11. ² Ezek. xliii. 7, 8. ³ 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40.

But our people, as baptized professors of the Gospel, must not sleep *unconscious of their obligations*. In our covenant to renounce the enemies of God and of our soul, to accept the Saviour as the ground of our hope, and to walk in the way of God, is there no power of conviction to arrest the self-indulgent, the unbelieving, and the disobedient? In the privileges, sealed to the faithful acceptance of the baptismal engagements, are there no motives to deadness to the world, love to the Saviour, confession of his cross, meetness for his kingdom? Philip Henry, ‘in dealing with his children about their spiritual state, took hold of them very much by the handle of their infant baptism; and frequently inculcated upon them, that they were born in God’s house, and were betimes dedicated and given up to him, and therefore were obliged to be his servants.’¹

Parents and sponsors must be reminded, that the dedication of a child to God, though a common, is a most solemn and difficult, service. It is an awful profanation to “offer the blind for sacrifice;”² and

Gospel grant. The child’s actual faith, repentance, and obedience are thereby made debts, then incurred, to be paid at a future time. And surely this is abundantly sufficient to invite and encourage parents to dedicate their children in baptism. As to the *real influence of baptism*; when the children grow up, we are sure that their baptismal regeneration, without something else, will not bring them to heaven; and yet it may be urged, in praying to God to give them grace, and in persuading them to submit to it. Matthew Henry on Baptism, pp. 130, 131. In the same valuable treatise, he thus bears his own personal testimony to the ordinance — ‘I cannot but take occasion’ (said he) ‘to express my gratitude to God for my infant baptism; not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ; but as it furnished my pious parents with a good argument (and as I trust through grace a prevailing argument) for an early dedication of my own self to God in my childhood. If God has wrought any good work upon my soul, I desire with humble thankfulness to acknowledge the moral influence of my infant baptism upon it.’ P. 118.

¹ Psalm cxvi. 16. Philip Henry’s Life, p. 85.

² Mal. i. 8.

most important, that they should understand *what they do*, in binding themselves and their children to the service of God—and *why they do it*—in conformity to the terms of the covenant, and to the will and appointment of God—as the renewal of their own personal covenant; and as their pledge, that their children shall be the Lord's for ever. These should be points in our Ministry of close and serious conviction, no less than of evangelical encouragement. They need to be instructed, that the covenant made with the parents and their seed, and apprehended by the parent for his seed jointly with himself, is the ground of the Christian's dedication of his child in baptism—that by this sacred act they profess their personal consecration to his service, (for who can give his child freely and sincerely to God, except he had “first given his own self to the Lord?”) and that they must daily train the child in the remembrance, that he is not their's, but God's. They must be reminded of the great honour of being entrusted with such a charge, and of the fearful guilt of neglecting so responsible a trust. *Where it is practicable*, no sponsors or parents should present themselves at the font without previous Ministerial instruction; ¹ that they may, under the Divine blessing, be led to this ordinance with a penitent, upright, believing, thankful, and cheerful spirit—presenting an “holy, and acceptable,” as well as a “reasonable service.”

Nor should we forget to inculcate the *improvement of the baptismal engagements*. Much use may be made

¹ For this purpose the Writer begs to recommend ‘Four Dialogues on Baptism’ (Hatchard), as most valuable for parochial distribution—popular in their form, spiritual in their character, practical in their tendency. A short Catechism on Baptism by Rev. J. Bickersteth, lately published, is of a kindred character to that on the Lord's Supper referred to, p. 576, note.

of it as a restraint from sin¹—an excitement to duty—a support to faith—and an encouragement to prayer; while the remembrance of the investiture of privileges may animate to press for a real participation of them; and to live as living members of a living head—in spiritual communion with a spiritual church.²

SECTION II.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PHILIP Henry's was an admirable rule relative to this sacrament—so to 'manage it, that the weak might not be discouraged, and yet the ordinance might not be profaned.'³ Our instructions should have a direct reference to both these objects. We must not raise the standard too high for the humble, contrite, or scrupulous. Nor must we open the door for the admission of all.⁴ Our instruction must vary according to the character of the recipient. To the ignorant

¹ Luther mentions a Christian woman—'Quæ, quoties tentabatur, non nisi baptismo suo repugnabat—dicens brevissime—Christiana sum.' 'Intellexit enim hostis'—adds Luther—'statim virtutem baptismi, et fidei, quæ in veritate promittentis pendebat, et fugit ab eo.'

² In some of the American churches the baptized children are assembled periodically in the church, with their guardians, and the elders of the church; and addressed by their pastor upon the obligation of their vow. Much permanent blessing is stated to have arisen from this plan. We cannot but wish that similar assemblies could be transferred with the same ecclesiastical solemnity into the services of our Establishment; or at least, that the spirit of this imposing ceremony were transferred into our ordinary Ministrations in a more frequent and affectionate enforcement of baptismal responsibilities.

³ Life, p. 43.

⁴ The exclusion of the ungodly, under every form, from this Christian communion, seems to be directly implied, if not commanded—Ezek. xliv. 6.—9. Comp. 1 Cor. x. 16—21.

and self-righteous, the spiritual character and the solemn obligations, of the ordinance; the hypocrisy of uniting in the deep-toned abasement and elevated exercises of our mode of administration; and most of all, the awful condemnation of unworthy participation, are subjects of direct and awakening conviction. For how affecting is the consideration, that the "table" of the Lord (to accommodate to the case the prophetic imprecation) will "become a snare before them, and that, which should have been for their welfare, will become a trap!"¹ To those who wish to commence their attendance in this unsatisfactory state, we should strongly recommend delay, with much self-inquiry and earnest prayer for Christian sincerity and Divine illumination. To the sincere, but scrupulous, we must shew, that there is the sin of unbelief as well as of presumption, sin in refusing to come as well as in coming unworthily—the guilt of disobedience to the dying command of our best and dearest friend—the neglect of the privilege of a heavenly feast, of an open confession of the cross, and of brotherly communion with the followers of Christ. In the early stage of awakened tenderness and concern, instruction and encouragement are peculiarly needed. The weakest disciple has an equal right to this ordinance with the most established. Perfect assurance is not required; rather the want of it is supposed. The seal is given in confirmation of what otherwise might be a matter of doubt. Let him consider *the solemnity* of the ordinance as enforcing preparation, and *its simplicity*, as encouraging faith; and so let him come with the humility and reverence of faith; and who can doubt of his acceptance?²

¹ Psalm lxi. 22.

² Mr. Robinson, on one occasion in his early Ministry, being

Much important use may however be made of the ordinance as preparatory to express and immediate invitation. It may be exhibited at an early stage of impression ; as presenting the most full and simple view of the blessed atonement ; as calculated to deepen the sensibilities of the heart in meditation on the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary ; and as leading the young Christian to contemplate a positive obligation, to count the cost of the consequent engagements, and to anticipate the enjoyment of its attendant privileges. Sacramental meetings with a special view to preparation for the ordinance, will form a most interesting part of Ministerial instruction. They will allow of a more simple and familiar exposition of the institution ;¹ while the previous assembling for prayer

surprised by the ardent and determined wish of a stranger to attend his sacrament, and having in vain recommended delay, at length asked him—'Do you cordially grieve for sin? Is your dependence simply upon Christ? Is your mind fully bent upon serving God in holiness?' The man answering satisfactorily, was desired to listen to the service, to look for Divine direction, and, if his heart were still inclined, to come with assurance of welcome. Strength and consolation were given; "and he went on his way rejoicing." *Life*, pp. 45—47.

¹ In this view the Bishop of Winchester has recommended them—*Charge*, pp. 42, 43. Suitable subjects for these meetings would embrace short and *applicatory illustrations of the Communion service*, as furnishing the most evangelical view of the ordinance, and at the same time an intelligent apprehension of its mode of administration—the want of which has been often found a serious hinderance to edification. The *grand subject of Christ crucified* would naturally lead us to set forth the nature of the ordinance, the qualifications of worthy participants, as well as to awaken conviction upon the sin of unworthy receiving, and to grapple with the various scrupulosities, that perplex the mind of the young Christian. See 1 Cor. xi. 23—32. More generally the *great doctrines connected with the knowledge of Christ; union with him, the free offer of his salvation, the blessings and practical obligations flowing from it*—these will be in the spirit of our Lord's discourses and prayer connected with the ordinance (*John xiii.—xviii*) and will be well calculated to draw forth the sacramental graces of faith and love, for the conviction of the professor, and the excitement of the sincere Christian to more habitual and

and exhortation is a refreshing excitement of Christian love. These meetings are also most important for the instruction of catechumens ; so that, when the pulse of spiritual life should warrant the language of direct invitation, the tenderness of feeling may be accompanied with a corresponding habit of spiritual intelligence ; the defect of which, even in worthy participants, perplexes the exercise of faith in “discerning the Lord’s body.” Individual pastoral instruction also will prove most effectual in restoring this ordinance to its high dignity among the Christian means of grace, and thus of instrumentally “adding to the church such as should be saved.”

CHAPTER VI.

CLERICAL AND CHURCH COMMUNION.

“THE communion of saints” was ordained of God for the accomplishment of some of the highest privileges of the Gospel. The neglect of it is consequently connected with the absence or low enjoyment of these privileges. Without it, the body of Christ may exist ; but it cannot thrive. The decline of the exercises of Christian love and unity, by which it is maintained, is but too evident ; and its revival by all Scriptural means, would open a new era of spiritual prosperity for the church. As it consists, and becomes effectual “by that which every joint supplieth”¹ by the links of union, which connect every Christian and Minister

elevated devotedness of walk. Matthew Henry’s well-known and excellent work on the Sacrament will suggest a considerable variety of subject and illustration for these interesting occasions.

¹ Eph. iv. 15, 16.

with his own society, the same means and materials are at hand for all circumstances. Shall we not find, that, if union with our Head were more distinctly kept in view, and if the several members moved in more connected harmony, there would be more abundant communication of spiritual gifts and graces, and the great end of the Gospel would be more effectually attained—which is not merely the salvation of so many individuals, but the effecting of this salvation, by uniting them into a body, and making them the channels of spiritual life to one another ?

We shall consider this subject in reference to ourselves and our people.

SECTION I.

CLERICAL COMMUNION.

DIFFERENCES of doctrinal views have proved serious hinderances to brotherly communion among ourselves. Even the grand uniting doctrine of the Christian's expectancy of his Lord's coming has set brother against brother, by the diversion of the mind from the heavenly glory of the event to uncertain speculations and circumstantialials connected with it.¹ Indifference to the subject has also greatly hindered this privilege. Union with our common Lord more habitually realized would be the best curative for this evil. For as each par-

¹ We cannot but remark—Had all the discussions on this subject been conducted in the spirit of Mr. Stewart's Sermons on the Advent, what a glow of Christian love and heavenly anticipation would have pervaded the church ! But would 'brethren grudge one against another' on account of the circumstantialials of the event (however important they might be considered to be), did they *really believe*.—"Behold the judge standeth before the door ?" James v. 9.

ticle of steel is attracted to the magnet, and thus the several particles are united to each other; so a more enlivening union of each with our Lord, would be the most effectual means of uniting us to each other. Clerical meetings also, upon the Apostolical principle of assembling for mutual sympathy, provocation, and exhortation,¹ would be most important. The discussion of religious subjects in mutual conference, and in the spirit of Christian forbearance and love, would tend to expand our views, correct our misconceptions, and enable us to dispense to our people a more intelligent system of Divine truth; while the kind interchange of thoughts, and the mutual communication of Ministerial difficulties and pastoral plans, would unite each other's hearts in brotherly love, and strengthen each other's hands in our most important work. Massillon characterizes these meetings as 'those holy assemblies, so calculated to maintain a sacerdotal union among the Ministers, a sacred harmony, in order to animate us individually to the uniform observance of the duties of the Ministry of the Church, and a support in order to clear up, or remove the doubts, and obviate the difficulties of it.'² This is a just view of what Clerical meetings ought to be—of a spiritual and pastoral character, distinguished by brotherly sympathy, counsel and faithfulness; and conducted in the recollection which Eliot

¹ Heb. x. 24, 25. Would not periodical or occasional meetings of Christian Ministers for social prayer *exclusively*, and with a special reference to the out-pouring of the Spirit, command a blessing upon their work? Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

² Charges, pp. 224, 225. The meetings to which he alludes were held in some religious house, called the Retreat, and the time devoted to meditation, prayer, exposition of Scripture, and mutual conference. In taking his leave of Massillon, the Writer has been much affected to observe his impressive and awakening truths often connected with most erroneous statements, or with a total deficiency of Christian doctrine.

placed before his brethren on a similar occasion—
 ‘The Lord Jesus takes much notice of what is done
 and said among his Ministers when they are together.
 Come, let us pray before we part.’¹ Such were the
 character and spirit of Archbishop Grindal’s ‘preach-
 ing exercises,’ which Lord Bacon pronounced ‘to be
 the best way to frame and train up preachers to handle
 the Word of God as it ought to be handled, that hath
 been practised.’² Union in spirit, counsel, prayer,
 and service among the Ministers of Christ, by every
 practicable means, will however, at all times, operate
 with most beneficial energy upon our work.

¹ Mather’s Life of Eliot.

² Full particulars are given in Strype and Fuller. They seem to have consisted of meetings of Clergy within large districts, under the presidency of some experienced Minister, for the purpose of discussing seriatim, passages of Scripture previously proposed—always commencing and ending with prayer. Lord Bacon (Treatise concerning the Church) recommends the adoption of these exercises in the Universities. They were put down by an arbitrary enactment of Queen Elizabeth under the influence of her favourite the Earl of Leicester, and in opposition to a most noble and Christian protest from Archbishop Grindal. They were however, partially revived in the next reign by the connivance or encouragement of Archbishop Matthew. Archbishop Tenison enlarged and improved the design. In his circular letter, April 6, 1699, (quoted by Dr. Woodward—Account of Religious Societies, ch. iv.) we have the following excellent advice. ‘It were to be wished, that the Clergy of every neighbourhood would agree upon frequent meetings to consult for the good of religion in general, and to advise with one another about any difficulties that may happen in their particular cures—as, ‘By what methods any evil custom may most readily be broken? How a sinner may most effectually be reclaimed? And in general, how each of them in their several circumstances may contribute most to the advancement of religion?’ ‘Such consultations as these, besides the mutual benefit of advice and instruction, will be a natural means to excite the zeal of some and reduce the overeagerness of others to a due temper, and to provoke all to a religious emulation in the improvement of piety and order within their respective parishes.’ Bishop Burnet (Past. Care, ch. viii.) and in our own time Bishop Burgess have given these meetings the sanction of authority. Herman of Cologne had combined Archbishops Grindal’s and Tenison’s plans in his system of Reformation. See his work *ut supra*, fol. 273.

SECTION II.

CHURCH COMMUNION.

THE Scriptural idea of a Church is that of one body animated by one soul in the fellowship of the Gospel.¹ The strength of a Church lies in the union of its several members. This union of spirit will naturally embrace the whole Christian body with affectionate interest and constant prayer; its more definite sphere of operation will be the individual community of which the Christian is a member. To promote therefore this union among our people is a high obligation of the Pastoral Ministry; and the means for this purpose are of diversified, though sometimes of delicate, application.

It seems important clearly to *explain the nature of schism*—as a separation from a Christian Church on matters of subordinate moment; and a rent in the body of Christ connected—if at all with conscience—yet with a scrupulous rather than with an enlightened conscience, and grounded upon self-will and self-conceit, rather than upon Christian forbearance, humility and love.² Not less important is it to *expose the guilt of schism*—as opposed to the spirit of the Gospel; injurious to the prosperity of the Church; and indulgent to the selfish principles of our corrupt

¹ See Acts ii. 41—47. iv. 32.

² Admitting that conscience is concerned—is no regard due to the consciences (possibly equally intelligent) of our brethren, and to the unity of the Church? If every point of difference *remotely connected with conscience* must be made a ground of separation, what room exists for the exercise of Christian forbearance? And how can the spiritual temple advance to its completion, when no two of the “lively stones, of which it is composed, are formed exactly alike?”

therefore, are bound to each other by the most endearing engagements.¹

The *full preaching of the Gospel* is however the grand cementing bond. ‘Feed your people better, and they will not stray’—was the reply of a Non-conformist to the complaint of a neighbouring Minister, that he had drawn away his people.² And though the enemy is too successful, even in the most Scriptural churches, in “beguiling unstable souls from the simplicity that is in Christ,” yet the standard of the Gospel is an effectual defence against any material injury.

We need not scruple to say of candid and orthodox dissenters in our parishes—“Give them of the fruit of their hands, and let their own works praise them in the gates.”³ We must however stand erect upon

¹ This is especially the case, when Sacramental meetings are connected with this holy ordinance; and more particularly, when their design is enlarged (as in intelligent Christian congregations it well may be) to embrace the main objects of church communion; in uniting in prayer for our personal progress in the Christian life—for our families, unconverted friends, or Christian friends in affliction—for our congregations, in their different states of ignorance, indifference, or of awakening interest, and consistent profession and enjoyment of the gospel—for our immediate neighbourhoods—for the general spread of the kingdom of Christ throughout the world—and for a holy and joyful anticipation of his second coming. Prayer is the exercise of Christian love, embodied in its most spiritual, enlivening, and practical operations; and therefore meetings of this character, and in this spirit, must have a most important influence in strengthening the bonds of unity and communion in Christian churches.

² ‘Eloquence may dazzle, and argument may compel the homage of its intellectual admirers; but it is only, if armed with the panoply of scriptural truth, that there will *gather and adhere* to the preacher a people, who hunger for the bread of Life, and make a business of their eternity. *To fill the church well, we must fill the pulpit well.*’ Chalmer’s Sermons at St. John’s Church, Glasgow, p. 392.

³ Prov. xxxi. 31. Some admirable views on this subject may be found in Burnet’s Preface to Pastoral Care. ‘Recollect that it is possible to defend your own fort without storming another’s battery. Maintain by scriptural argument your own principles

our own ground as Ministers of the Establishment ; taking care, that — should we be' constrained to *oppose them as Dissenters*—we cease not to *love and pray for those among them*, whom (whatever be their prejudices or misconceptions) we cordially believe to be *true servants of Christ*. Yet, as a general rule, we should recommend to our people to combine with hearty good-will to other communions ¹ a strict adherence to our own pale, and a diligent and thankful improvement of its privileges. Some indeed are indifferent whom they follow ; and, as a proof of their expansive love, they would follow all. But this was not the rule of Christ, ² or of his Apostles ; ³ nor is it recommended by the experience of its own disciples, who are usually found at the extreme point from Christian stedfastness, and far more distinguishable by “itching ears,” than by teachable hearts ; with zeal enough to drive them forward, but with no judgment to direct their course. ⁴

Yet should not the rise and progress of the evil be with us a matter of self-inquiry ? Baxter exclaims — ‘ O that the Ministry had been more guiltless of those errors and schisms that they talk against ! But it is easier to chide a sectary in the pulpit, and to subscribe a testimony against them, than to play the skilful physician for their cure, and do the tenth part

and practices with modest confidence—but rail not ; insinuate no reflection on your opponents ; name them not, unless with respect.’ Such was the wise advice of a Dissenting Minister of an eminently Christian spirit to his pupil. *Jay’s Life of Winter*.

¹ Eph. vi. 24.

² See Mark ix. 38—40. Our Lord would not have his disciples forbid the man ; but he did not imply, that they should leave their own Master and follow him. *Comp. Prov. xxvii. 8.*

³ “ Order,” combined with stedfastness,” formed [the beauty of the Church of Colosse, and the ground of the Apostle’s joy on their account. *Col. ii. 5.*

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

plainness and sincerity ; a careful guard against a censorious or controversial spirit ; and anxiety to impart only what will tend to the advancement of Christian knowledge, holiness and love.

Yet even in the primitive age of simplicity and godliness, a harvest of tares sprung up, where better seed had been sown. "Spots there were in their feasts of charity,"¹ which made it too evident, that they "came together, not for the better, but for the worse." The recollection of this abuse even in the best times, seems strongly to suggest the importance of the balance of Ministerial superintendence, to maintain Christian godliness in connexion with Christian order, and to preserve brotherly love and unity on the solid basis of Christian humility. Mr. Robinson, one of the wisest experimentalists in an extensive parochial sphere, decidedly discountenanced the principle of unrestrained communion, from the first commencement of his Ministry at Leicester ; and ultimately relinquished the plan of Christian conference, as being *under his circumstances* unnecessary and injudicious.²

But after all that has been said, the want of Church communion is a serious evil among us, and operates as unfavourably upon the mass, as the want of Christian communion upon individuals. It affords also a plausible ground for separation. Dissenters have private meetings of the members of their churches for prayer, exposition, and free conversation on matters of doctrine, conduct, and experience. Such meetings are well fitted to promote mutual confidence ; and, though not unmixed with serious evils, yet doubtless are attended with their measure of Christian edification.

¹ Jude 12.

² Vaughan's Life of Robinson, pp. 85—88. Comp. also Scott's Life, pp. 494—498.

But in our Ministrations for the most part there is nothing to compact the body of Christians solidly together—nothing to gather out the spiritual from the visible church, nothing to give consistency to any plan of union, by which the several members might “(like Jonathan and David in the wood) strengthen each other’s hands in God.”¹ And therefore the entrance of any irregular excitement or unscriptural system into our spheres, would prove a sifting time, a drawing away of the weak and unstable from our standard. To the system of dissenting communion, we might feel decided—though not uncharitable—objections. It seems to forget—that the Minister—not some official member of the Church—“is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts”—that “his lips must keep knowledge, and at his mouth they should seek the law:”² and that, as “the communion of saints” is the mutual intercourse of Christians under the influence of their Great Head; so is regular Church communion the interchange of sympathy among the several members, under the direction, more or less immediate, of him, who stands to them in the place of their head. But why should not we gather around us, under our affectionate superintendence, assemblies of Christians, ready and willing to learn of one another, to exhort one another, and to lift up one another’s hands in humility and love? The test of admission should be—not doctrinal knowledge, gifted or sounding profession, or fervid zeal—but (so far as they can be ascertained) “simplicity and godly sincerity” of heart and conduct. Circumstances would suggest the regulating of these meetings, so as to restrain them within due bounds, and at the same time to encourage the unreserved communication

¹ 1 Sam. xxiii. 16.

² Mal. ii. 7.

of sentiment. The members might be allowed to propose any Scripture for consideration, or to ask any question concerning Scriptural difficulties, the worship of God, their own experience, their family trials, their duties to their relations and neighbours, books to read—and in short how they may best advance the work of God in their own souls, and in the souls of those connected with them. If the parties were small, the plan, while invested with the formality of a religious service, might be cast into somewhat of a conversational mould with the best prospect of interest and edification.¹

Selection, however, in these meetings, is of much importance. It tends to elevate the tone of religion in our parishes, by exhibiting the broad line of separation between the Church and the world. The exclusion also of unworthy members shuts out a large

¹ When the Writer first suggested this plan, he was not aware that it had been practised among the Puritans. According to their plan of proceeding—The question was given out, and answers were required; from whence arose a free and unreserved conversation; in the course of which the Minister would help, as he saw occasion; taking care to restrain the parties in the path of the discussion, and to see that they kept within their bounds, without encroaching upon his office. At the conclusion of the conference, he gathered in their scattered sentiments into an orderly method, confirmed and applied them by suitable Scriptures and remarks of his own. See *Life of Mr. T. Wilson in Clark's Lives*, Vol. iii. p. 33. His own *Life*, prefixed, gives a statement of the advantages of these meetings. Pref. 4, 5. Interesting specimens may also be seen in *Philip Henry's Life*, pp. 41, 42, 349—351. His excellent son introduced them also into his congregation, as a means of Christian communion with his young people, himself always presiding. He appears to have had a similar meeting among the older members of his Church of a less restricted character. One of his prayers before the sacrament proved his interest in these meetings—'That which I desire particularly to receive from the Lord at his table tomorrow, is wisdom for personal conference about matters of religion.' *Life*, pp. 134, 135. *Mather* also gives an interesting sketch.—*Essays to do Good*, pp. 87—91. *Baxter* remarks the necessity of social Christian meetings to preserve unity among our people; but seems to insist on the necessity of Ministerial control. *Reformed Pastor*.

mass of inconsistency, which would be readily transferred to the collective body; while the union with those, whom in judgment as well as in charity we believe to belong to the Church of Christ, spreads a truly delightful atmosphere of love and sacredness over the assemblies. Such Societies are well calculated to give the Minister an increased interest in the sympathies and prayers of his people. Nor will they be less profitable to the several members, as a bond of Christian affection and wholesome restraint; exciting them to watch over each other with brotherly love, and over themselves "with godly jealousy," in the recollection of the responsibility of their character before the Church and the world, as members of a Christian body. Yet if a society—so fenced in—be thought to endanger the humility of its members on one side, and their charity on the other—the same system might substantially be formed, and probably with less ground of exception, upon the principles of more open communion. Suppose a general invitation to our communicants—here none are excluded, who wear this badge of a credible profession. Yet the spiritual character of these meetings will generally preclude the attendance of unspiritual professors; while their non-attendance will be self-exclusion, and consequently without any plausible ground of offence. And even the few, who may intrude to preserve their name in the Church, though they will doubtless operate as a partial restraint upon the general body, yet may hear much for their personal conviction, while their forwardness will be repressed by firm and judicious restraint. The more *spiritual and practical* however the tone of these meetings are, the less will they accord with their taste, and the more speedily will it hasten their retirement.

Mr. Walker of Truro organized Societies for Church communion, after Dr. Woodward's pattern, upon this principle of fostering control, with admirable wisdom and satisfactory effect.¹ The objects however of these

¹ Mr. Walker's object was, to excite among the serious members of his congregation a particular interest in each other's spiritual welfare; that they should watch over each other, exhort, reprove, encourage, as brethren and sisters in the faith of the Gospel. His plan was—a weekly meeting of those communicants, whose religious profession was considered undoubted. These he separated into two classes; one of unmarried men; another of married men with their wives, and other females of the Society. They met alternately every other week. The whole society was under his own superintendence as director—regulating all their business (such as the admission and exclusion of members; making new rules, &c.) presiding in the weekly meetings, or prescribing for them a form of proceeding, when unavoidably absent. They began their meeting with a form of prayer, exhortation, and singing. Connected with this, were smaller assemblies at their own houses in rotation, for more free and unreserved Christian communion, with the same separation of unmarried and married members. For the direction of these meetings, Mr. Walker drew up most admirable regulations. The general objects of these Societies were described in Mr. Walker's first address, to be—1. To glorify God. 2. To be quickened and confirmed themselves. 3. To render them more useful among their neighbours. The members were pledged to exercise faithful superintendence over each other; each to consider himself as "his brother's keeper;" to be bound by the laws of charity not to "suffer sin upon each other," nor to allow it in themselves; to be strictly circumspect in their lives; separate from worldly customs and practices; walking in humility, meekness, heavenly-mindedness, and love; and often considering it as a motive to holiness, that they belonged to a society, whose avowed object was, the promotion of the glory of God.

The rules of these Societies were formed upon high Christian principles. Their strict separation from worldly amusements was inculcated upon the ground of their being disciples of a crucified Saviour. Their watchfulness over each other was directed to spring from watchfulness over their own hearts, lest there should be 'the least decay of love to Christ, or of zeal for his honour and the good of souls' there. The obligation and privilege of mutual intercession were inculcated. They were warned against disgust at those, who exercised towards them the duty of Christian faithfulness and love. And the remembrance, that their very fellowship with a Society professedly Christian, would tend to foster spiritual pride; suggested strong and repeated exhortations to humility and self-abasement. See the valuable Life of Mr. Walker, prefixed to his Lectures on the Catechism, pp. xxv—

associations (details of which are given below) being distinctly spiritual, it was evident that they could be preserved only by the spirituality of the members under the prompt vigilance of the Director. Without this constant security the form only would remain. Yet under Mr. Walker's wise and efficient care, the influence of these societies was maintained with much edification in a most important sphere, and even con-

xlviii. Comp. also his excellent Collection of Tracts entitled 'Practical Christianity.'—The Writer, wishing to give his work a practical character, ventures to add a digest of Mr. Walker's rules, simplified for more general application. I. That these meetings be under the direction and superintendence of the Minister present. II. That all the members pray especially for their Minister, and for the Divine blessing on his preaching, and on all the means of grace, as well as on these meetings. III. That, besides these meetings, the members endeavour to meet in smaller numbers as early as possible on Sunday morning, to pray for the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. IV. That the heads of families adopt family prayer in their own houses; without which no Church unity or Christian love can be expected. V. That they depend solely on the Holy Spirit through the mediation of Christ, to excite, advance, and perfect all good within themselves and others. VI. That they be particularly kind to each other, as fellow-members of the same family, and united to the same Divine Head; and that they cultivate the spirit of wisdom, forbearance, and love to Christians, who differ from them in smaller matters; as also to those, who may oppose the Gospel or themselves. VII. That all prying curiosity into their neighbour's affairs be avoided; but that all be encouraged to mention any hopeful sign they may see in them. VIII. That in the spirit of meekness and humility, "each esteeming other better than themselves," they do freely and affectionately warn each other of their faults; and that they be ready also to "confess their faults one to another." IX. That all do consider the solemn responsibility of being communicants at the Lord's table, and earnestly endeavour to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things"—in life, temper, and conversation. X. That no conversation passing at these meetings be disclosed elsewhere, except to the members of the Society, who may have been unavoidably absent. XI. That these meetings may answer the intended purpose of Christian fellowship, each member should attend constantly, and be present precisely at the hour of meeting. From the Rules of a religious Society, (which appears to have worked well upon more exclusive principles), we extract the following—chiefly relating to its mode of administration—'That the object of this meeting is to promote a spirit of decided piety in its members, and to unite them closely to each other in Christian

tinued for many years after Mr. Walker's scriptural doctrines had, unhappily for the people, ceased to be delivered from the pulpit.¹ While the importance of mutual confidence and help cannot be denied; yet to secure the advantages without the attendant tempt-

affection and fellowship—That the principal means proposed be the singing of a Psalm or Hymn, offering up prayer, and expounding the Scriptures; which two last exercises shall be conducted solely by the Minister. The members shall however severally be at liberty in succession to select the Scripture for exposition at the next meeting—That the member, whose turn it may be to name the subject for the next exposition, shall also be at liberty to put any question for advice in any case, or for information on any subject, whether connected with the individual soul, or with the general cause of God, which question shall be answered after the exposition at the next meeting; and at the close of the meeting, any member may request through the medium of the Minister a special interest in the prayers of the other members, when particular circumstances seem to require it—That in case a member should wish any subject introduced not to be made a topic of conversation elsewhere, it must be introduced as confidential, and the members will be expected not to betray the confidence so reposed in them—That any member, wishing to propose a candidate for admission, shall make such proposition privately to the Minister after the meeting is over; when any of the members may also stay for the purpose of consulting him on any private matter, which could not have been introduced with propriety in the presence of the meeting—That, should a member be guilty of any scandalous offence, his name shall be erased from the Register book of the Society at the time of meeting; when the same shall be notified by the Minister to the other members—That a member, accused of any inconsistency, which may be grievous to the rest, shall first be admonished by the Minister in private; and, should he persist in the inconsistency, the evil shall be pointed out to the offender in the presence of the meeting; and if there be no signs of compunction shewn, expulsion from the Society must then take place.—*Christian Guardian*, Jan. 1830.

¹ Mr. Richmond also in his early Ministry established an interesting Church-meeting, mainly upon these principles, though with less formality of system. Its object was large, social, and edifying. It included the explanation of the Scriptures, Prayer Book, and other useful books; friendly and Christian exhortation according to their circumstances; questions of scriptural or experimental difficulties; and united prayer for a blessing upon themselves, their families, their neighbours, their country, and the whole Church of God throughout the world. See his *Life*, pp. 43, 44, note.

ations and inlets to evil, is a matter which exercises the minds of many Ministers with considerable perplexity. The system of social meetings, which we have endeavoured to detail, requires a previous counting of the cost. Its management and the maintainance of its interest and effectiveness, are matters of no small difficulty; while under wise regulations the harvest will be of important account. The junction of Ministerial control with Ministerial confidence offers, upon the whole, the best promise of attaining the desired ends of unity, harmony, and truth—the only means of that “Christian communion,” which (as a Puritan Minister justly remarked) *“keeps our religion in breath, and without which it will be ready to die.”*

CHAPTER VII.

THE OFFICE AND USES OF HELPERS.

IT was never intended, that the Minister should sustain the whole weight of the service of God. Moses was assisted in his work by seventy elders, in tender consideration of his overwhelming responsibility.¹ And thus the office of “helpers” in the primitive Church appears to have been of considerable service in promoting the efficiency of the Christian Ministry.² And one of the most important results of the pastoral work is, that the confidence with our people, and the insight into their individual character which we thus acquire, enables us to employ them in subservient but most efficient spheres of labour. Few departments, however, of our work require more of that “wisdom that

¹ See Num. xi. 10—25. Comp. also Jethro's wise advice to Moses, Exod. xviii. 13—26. ² Rom. xvi. 9, 12. Phil. iv. 3.

is profitable to direct." The differences of administration in the present day, and the different temperament of the Church from the primitive times; the rise of a spirit of independency; the excitement of spiritual pride; the introduction of the baneful evil of "many masters;"¹ and the consequent diminution of the just influence of the Parochial head;—are temptations incident to this system, that will exercise unceasing watchfulness. But yet, with strict subordination to Ministerial control, and with a large share of humility and forbearance, room might readily be found for the active co-operation of lay-agency in various offices, defined by the local system, and portioned out according to the "diversities of gifts."

Dr. Chalmers has fully pointed out the relative advantages to Ministers and people from thus calling forth the energies of the laity into subordinate employment in our respective spheres.² If in the first instance it may be more easy to do the work ourselves, they will ultimately be found in many cases to be more effective labourers. It is probable, that some of us may be suffering loss from the neglect of this use of our people; and that to this cause may be attributed the success, with which they are often drawn from us, by those who unduly avail themselves of their assistance, and elevate them to an importance most injurious to the simplicity and lowliness of a Christian profession.³

The various plans of the Ministerial economy for the good of the parish will always furnish a suitable sphere of labour. The work of instruction in the Sunday School—the superintendence of adult schools—the management or promotion of religious societies

¹ James iii. 1.

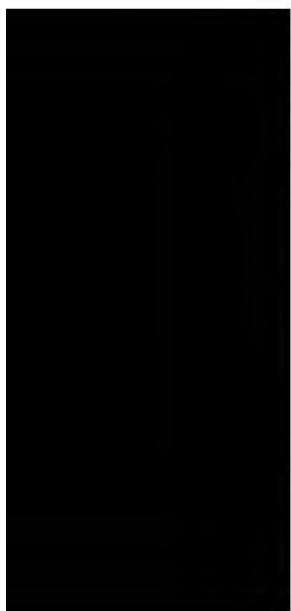
² See his Civic Economy.

³ See quotation from Baxter, pp. 611, 612.

— the diligent and sympathizing inquiry into the wants of the poor—the administering to their temporal necessities, and much more to their spiritual benefit—the visitation of the sick,—these, and similar plans, will furnish as much employment for the time of private Christians, as a conscientious regard to their secular callings will generally allow.

The duty of undertaking this office, with a due consideration of their private circumstances, should be inculcated upon every private Christian. The work of instruction belongs to Ministers primarily—not exclusively. They must be movers and directors of the system, but not the sole agents. Their office is to set many lesser wheels in motion, in subservient harmony with the grand movements of the machine. Christians cannot seek their own edification too fervently ; but they may be occupied in it too selfishly. Many appear to have no more interest or care for the unconverted around them, than if there were no such beings in the world. Or they are content to leave their souls to the superintendence of the Parish Minister, with the same indifference as they leave their bodies to the care of the Parish Apothecary. They are little aware of the loss, which arises to themselves, no less than to the Church by this want of exertion. They much need to be reminded of their obligations—that they are “called out of darkness into marvellous light,” that they might “arise and shine”—that they are bound therefore, to strengthen our hands, not only by the light of their example, but by personal labour and activity. We were destitute of helpers, and God has converted them that they might be our “helpers in the Lord.”

This will naturally lead us to remark, that the *individual advantages* of this service are of the highest



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with eloquence, or perhaps with systematic accuracy, but yet with that earnestness of simplicity, which characterizes the Gospel, honours God, and is honour to God. And this training in the exercises of Christian love and faithfulness, in the most limited sphere, qualifies the young helpers for a more extended and defined labour in the subordinate service of God. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much."¹

The advantage also of this system to the minister is of equal consideration. It has been well observed. 'Lay-agency is of incalculable moment. A Minister cannot undertake every thing himself. He must not fritter away his time. He must not widen too much his field of personal effort. He must concentrate, he must influence, he must be the centre to a hundred hands and minds moving around him. This is more especially the case in populous places; where the actual efforts of any one or two Ministers would be lost in detail, and his public instructions would be hasty and undigested effusions, if he attempted individual instruction. Wisdom therefore must be exercised. Others must be set to work, and a machinery be erected, of which he takes only the general guidance.'² Indeed in what other mode can a Minister in a wide field of labour acquit his own conscience of the responsible charge of thousands of perishing immortals, except he do *per alium*, what it is impossible that he can do *per se*; and set in motion a machinery, whose influence, directly emanating from himself, is felt throughout every part. There are few Christian

¹ Luke xvi. 10.

² Prefatory Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, by Rev. Daniel Wilson, p. xlv. The Writer needs only to refer to the Bishop of Chester's Charge for a clear, important, and practical statement upon this interesting subject, pp. 21—26.

importance. There is no better stimulant to personal religion, than active devotedness to the spiritual wants of our fellow-sinners. In some respects therefore more good is done by the employment of helpers than would have been effected by our own exertions. For while there is the same good in the object, an additional benefit is conferred by the instrumentality. Graces are called into exercise, which otherwise might have been dormant; while we experience sensible relief in our work, by making them partakers of our burdens and our privileges, our sorrows and our joys. With this view, and with a due regard to relative duties (which must upon no account be superseded), it is advisable to press this Christian responsibility upon those that are just commencing their Christian course. Such persons are apt to be absorbed in the new world of interest that surrounds them. They want to be drawn forth into the active habits of practical religion—to have their graces exercised, their sympathies excited, their sense of obligation deepened, and their view of the realities of the Gospel established, by a close contact with the spiritual distresses and supports of those around them. For some departments of this employ, Christian experience and wisdom are materially requisite; and not less needed are the exercises of Christian patience, humility, earnestness, and love. But these are qualities, that gather strength and maturity by diligent and prayerful exercise. The plain duty and simple work of private instruction fall within the sphere of the lowest spiritual capacity. Nothing more is needed than an acquaintance with the value of the soul—the lost estate of man—the need of a Saviour—the power of his love—the work of his Spirit—the hope of his glory. These, when really felt, will be readily explained—not indeed

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congregations in a large sphere, but would afford an organized system of helpers, to "supply" the Minister's necessary "lack of service on behalf of" his people. Let him only impress their minds with the love of Christ, and the love of souls, and with a sense of their Christian responsibility flowing from these principles. Let him suggest the most suitable means of acting under a sense of their obligations. Let him from time to time direct, encourage, or control their operations. Let him excite them to take only one step towards the attainment of their object—to spread, if it were only a luminous spot, over their several districts—to be in constant motion, gradually proceeding in the system of regular distributiveness; and they will become most useful coadjutors in the Ministry of the Gospel. The system of leaving tracts judiciously selected by the Pastor, at the doors of the houses of their neighbourhood, and exchanging them periodically, has been found an important means of extending light, and exciting interest in many dark places of our land.¹ We should only further suggest,

¹ The System of District Societies appears to be making progress in some of our largest spheres, and under the sanction (especially in the Metropolis) of our highest Ecclesiastical authorities. It cannot be too strongly recommended, as the most likely means of effecting extensive spiritual good among masses of immortal beings, that could not otherwise be reached. The nucleus of the system is a Christian congregation, and the strength of it—Christian Visitors, who will laboriously go through the work in all its duties of patience, compassion, and self-denial. The District Visiting Society in London has entered upon the work with a well-organized system of operation, and in a truly Christian spirit of perseverance. They thus forcibly state the necessity for their labours, in language of general application to extensive spheres that might be mentioned—'Some parishes have gradually become so thickly peopled, that an acquaintance, either personal or through the medium of his clerical assistants, with the majority of his parishioners, is beyond the reach of the most active and laborious incumbent. With the utmost zeal on his part, thousands may yet be left comparatively to themselves, without even the moral restraint, which in a smaller parish the frequent intercourse

wherever this system is systematically in operation, the advantage of monthly or quarterly meetings of the Visitors for prayer and conference.

Between the clergyman and his people often imposes on the most careless and unconcerned. Extensive districts are to be found, where a mass of ignorance, vice, and superstition, is untouched, or nearly so, by the ordinary and prescribed means of preventing '*error in religion, and viciousness in life.*' Their inhabitants live in the undisturbed practice of ungodliness, by the force of mutual example confirming each other in the disregard of every religious duty. Places of worship are unfrequented by them. They will not go in search of the means of spiritual instruction, these means must be brought home to them. If an impression is to be made, they must be invited, nay, "compelled" to attend to their eternal interests, by the earnest, persevering, long-suffering labours of individuals, willing to penetrate the abodes of misery and vice, to go from door to door, and to encounter frequent disappointment in their benevolent object.'

'The appointment of Visitors' (as the London Committee judiciously observe) is of the highest moment; they may be obtained from every rank of society and many of them will be Members of Local Committees. It is however essential, that they should be impressed with the importance of eternity—persons who earnestly desire, that their fellow-creatures may walk in a right course, and who will interest themselves, not only in the relief of the body, but in the spiritual welfare of those whom they undertake to visit.

'In order that they may have time for the performance of such serious duties, care should be taken not to devolve too much upon one individual; in general from twenty to thirty families will be found sufficient for the most active Visitor, and for female Visitors a number still more limited may often be desirable. If however two Visitors act together (a course which will frequently be found expedient, particularly in their early labours) a large section may be allotted them.

'But there is no point, which the Central Committee would more strongly urge on Local Committees, than that of confining their own and their Visitors' exertions within a practicable compass; a small space effectively visited is infinitely preferable (whether in reference to the good that is really done, or to the example which it affords) to a large district, only partially occupied.'

Their instructions to the Visitors are most admirable. 'You will visit the families comprehended in your Section, as often as time and other circumstances may render expedient, with the view of promoting their temporal and spiritual improvement.—You will make it your first object, to gain their attention and secure their confidence, by convincing them, that you are actuated solely by motives of Christian charity and kindness, and have no other end

One most valuable office belonging to this department of helpers, is the discovery of cases of religious impression in their several districts, and the encouragement under these circumstances of free and unreserved communication with the Minister—as Barnabas, when he became acquainted with the change of character in

in view than their welfare.—Many topics of friendly conversation and inquiry will readily suggest themselves to you; and in the selection of these, much will depend on your own good sense and discretion.’

‘The Committee, however, would suggest the following hints:—

1. Your first inquiries should relate to those subjects, which afford the greatest interest to the poor; such as the number of which the family consist—the ages of the children—whether they attend any school, or can read—whether the family possesses a Bible or any other religious books; and, where you find a disposition to answer your inquiries, you will endeavour to ascertain whether the persons you visit attend Public Worship, and what—their occupation—means of subsistence—whether by parochial relief, by labour, charity, or otherwise—the period of their residence in the district—amount of rent paid—and manner of spending Sundays and leisure hours.—2. You will gently and prudently lead their attention to religious subjects, endeavouring to impress their minds with a sense of the importance of their immortal souls, and of the value of the Holy Scriptures, as a message of mercy from God to sinful man. You will urge on them the duty and privilege of observing the Sabbath, of prayer, and of attending Public Worship. You will point out to them, as occasion may require, their relative duties; and avail yourself of suitable opportunities of reproof open vice. You will pay particular attention to the young, the sick, and the aged. You will encourage parents to send their children to Day and Sunday Schools, and recommend grown-up persons, who cannot read, to attend adult evening schools. You will inform those who are without a Bible, how they may obtain one, and suggest weekly subscriptions for this purpose; and you will transmit their name and residence to the nearest Bible Association, or to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.—3. It will be necessary, that you should be provided with information as to the Places of Worship, Adult, Day, Sunday, and Infant Schools in the neighbourhood; and where there is any obstacle to the attendance of the persons you visit, from want of accommodation or distance, you will make this circumstance known to the Local Committee of the District.—4. You will not fail to inculcate habits of industry, and cleanliness, both of rooms and persons. Where practicable, employment should be suggested to persons out of work, and in many cases it will be desirable to point out the advantages of Savings Banks, and encourage weekly deposits

Saul, gladly introduced him to the Church.¹ While this treatment is an important benefit to the individuals, it is also a real support to the Minister, who is thus enabled to combine with his painful exercises respecting

for rent.—5. In cases of sickness and want, you will endeavour to ascertain, whether there is any medical or other attendance, whether relief is afforded by any benevolent society, and what charitable assistance is required.—6. The Committee recommend that relief should be administered (where practicable) through the medium of some existing Society or Institution; and it will be very desirable, that the Visitors should be provided with recommendations of Subscribers to such Societies and to the nearest Dispensary, to be used as occasion may require.—7. It may in some cases be advisable to release the tools and clothes of mechanics from pawn; but, except in instances of pressing and immediate want, it is strongly recommended, that no pecuniary aid be afforded from the funds of the Society, before the case has been submitted to the Local Committee.—8. It will be necessary to bear in mind the prevalence of fraud and imposture; and it is hoped, that the frequency of your visits will gradually facilitate their detection. While you will avoid all appearance of harshness, or want of feeling for the misery which meets your notice, you will use every precaution to guard against the misapplication of charitable aid upon objects of merely pretended distress, or upon those who are receiving adequate relief from other sources.—9. You will avoid as far as possible encroaching on the necessary occupations of families and individuals; and with this view it will be very important, that you should ascertain the time when visits are most acceptable, and put persons the least out of their way.—10. You will not attempt to force yourselves on those, who shew a determined aversion to your visits; but you will express to them in a friendly manner your readiness to call upon them again, should they become more disposed to receive you.—11. It will generally be desirable, that the Visitors should go two and two, although they may frequently be engaged at the same time with different families under the same roof.—12. You will be provided with a journal, in which you will enter the name, residence, &c. of the persons visited, with answers to certain queries suggested; which should be submitted to the Local Committee of your district, at each meeting, accompanied with a notice of any particular occurrences tending to illustrate character, shew improvement, call for particular advice, &c.; and with such general observations on the state of your Section as may appear useful.—13. The Committee would only further intreat you to remember the Master whom you serve; and in cases of opposition or insult, to govern your temper—to return good for evil—blessing for cursing—to be “patient towards all men, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves.”’

¹ See Acts ix. 27.

the unconverted—his delightful commission to “comfort the people of God,”¹ and establish them in the faith of the Gospel.

Baxter wisely recommends us to make all possible use of the gifts of our people in an orderly way, and under our own superintendence, lest they should use them in a way of division against us. He remarks to Ministers, as one of the causes of schism—‘a desire not to make use of the gifts that God hath given them for their assistance;’—and adds, ‘I am persuaded, if Ministers had thus made use of the parts of their ablest members they might have prevented much of the divisions, and distractions, and apostacies that hath befallen us; for they would then have found work enough upon their hands for higher parts than theirs, without invading the Ministry. Experience would have convinced and humbled them more than our words can do. A man may think that he can stir up a block, or pluck up a tree by the roots, that never tried; but when he sets his hand to it, he will come off ashamed. And see that you drive them to diligence in their own works, and let them know, what a sin it is to neglect their own families, and their ignorant miserable neighbours; and then they will be kept humble, and have no such mind to be running upon more work, when they feel you spurring them on to their own, and rebuking them for the neglect; nor will they have any leisure for schismatical enterprizes, because of the constancy and greatness of their employment.’²

It must however be remembered, that *helpers are not Ministers*. They may speak with exhortation, entreaty, and love, but not with authority. Their work should assume the character rather of brotherly admonition

¹ See Isa. xl. 1, 2.

² Conclusion of Reformed Pastor.

than of fatherly teaching. They have no special commission intrusted to them. They must "speak as the oracles of God, and as of the ability which God giveth;"¹ but they cannot speak as "ambassadors for Christ." They may speak in his name (that is, in dependance upon him as their Head) but not "in his stead"—not as having a message and commission from him. They need at once to be excited, directed, and controled; and under this discipline we may cherish the "hope, when their faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by them according to our rule abundantly."² They will indeed be to us, "instead of eyes;"³ their "work and labour of love" will act with considerable power, as one of the wheels in the great machine of perpetual motion; and their reward of grace will be with "Urbane and the beloved Persis," with "Clement and with other fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life."⁴

But we must not forget, that the meanest member of the church sustains this useful character of a helper. How cheering is it to enter the pulpit (as the Apostle spoke of coming to Rome) not only to "impart to our hearers some spiritual gift;" but with the hope of being "comforted by their faith!"⁵ When faith glistens in the eyes of an attentive congregation, how does it quicken our energies, interest, and love; producing from the impulse of the occasion thoughts far more striking than had been the result of the contemplation of the study! We need scarcely remark upon the daily help derived to our Ministry from the power of a consistent example, sometimes even more forcible than the pulpit Ministry.⁶ None can gainsay

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 11.² 2 Cor. x. 16.³ Numb. x. 31.⁴ Rom. xvi. 9, 12. Phil. iv. 3.⁵ Rom. i. 11, 12.⁶ See 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

or resist this visible "seal of our Apostleship." As confirming every word of instruction, invitation, and encouragement; and as exhibiting the strait ways of the Gospel to be "paths of pleasantness and peace" this testimony is above all price.

Least of all, must we forget (though it has been before alluded to) the help, which our Ministry obtains from the prayers of our people. So sensible was the Apostle of the value of this help, that, distinguished as he was for eminence of grace, experience, and services, he pleads for it with the earnestness of a beggar requesting alms.¹ Bishop Davenant justly traces the allowance of so many ignorant Ministers in the Church to the want of hearty supplication.² And indeed a praying people will be sure eventually to be blessed with an acceptable and edifying Ministry. We are far more in the power of our people than we are at all times conscious of. Humanly speaking—our personal graces, the spiritual character of our Ministrations, and the consequent flow of consolation and fruitfulness with our people, very materially depend upon their secret labours on our behalf. We are the conduits of grace, by which the Church is refreshed. The Church therefore must pray for the continual supplies to be poured into the conduits; or they will return (like the nobles of Judah) "with their vessels empty; ashamed, and confounded, and covering their heads."³ It will doubtless be found, that the Gospel is promoted by the prayers as well as by the Ministry of the Church. Christians therefore should be reminded, that they owe this exercise of love to their fellow-sinners as redeemed by the same blood—to us, as in some degree probably the instruments of their salvation—and still more to our great Master, as the

¹ See Rom. xv. 30.

² Daven. in Col. iv. 3.

³ Jer. xiv. 3.

undoubted and sole Author of it. Let therefore the blessing, through the instrumentality of the Ministry, be sought in this way—"ye also helping together in prayer to God for us; that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf."¹ And while we realize the delightful enjoyment of being raised on the wings of our people's prayers; they will not be without their recompence. For never is supplication sent up for a blessing upon the Minister, but it returns with tenfold blessing upon the supplicant's head.²

At all events therefore, let the fallacy of the indolent notion be exposed, that Ministers are to do every thing. Let all our people be reminded of the immense burden of our work: "besides" the trials of the Christian life, "that which cometh upon us daily—the care of all the Churches."³ If then they can do any thing, let them help us in winning souls to Christ. Let them spread the influence of the sacred leaven around them, "till the whole be leavened." Let them know our great need of their prayers and example to confirm our doctrine; so that, while it is perverted, misunderstood, or opposed on all sides, we may be able to point to their lives and tempers in illustration of its holy tendency and happy effects—"ye are our epistle, known and read of all men—manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us."⁴

¹ 2 Cor. i. 11.

² Specific remembrance of the Minister in secret and social worship, on the mornings of the Sabbaths especially (not of course forgetting his daily claim upon their remembrance) might be inculcated with the greatest, though perhaps unconscious, advantage to ourselves and to our Ministry.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 28. "Cometh upon me"—rushing like a torrent, one after another, ready to bear me down. For the illustration of the peculiar emphasis of the term, Beza and Doddridge may be consulted, or perhaps a better commentator than either, at particular seasons of trial—*experience*. ⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISCELLANEOUS.¹

A FEW particulars, which have not hitherto found a place in our work, may be here specified, such as—*The importance of adult schools.* These are indeed the complement of the School System. It is difficult to retain boys in the weekly school long enough to ground them in the principles of useful instruction. The Sunday School also is left without any other means of preserving the knowledge which they have acquired. The utility of adult schools—as an indefinite continuance of the course of instruction—is therefore of the highest consideration. The knowledge of the word of God is equally valuable to adults as to children; while their capacity of understanding it (though much hindered by inability to read) is far greater. Shame indeed will sometimes restrain the open confession of ignorance, which stoops to the first elements of instruction; yet on the other hand, experience even of the temporal disadvantages of ignorance (where the spiritual deprivations are not apprehended) supplies a constant stimulus for exertion. The smallness of numbers must not discourage. It is a great matter to persuade a person in the middle or decline of life, that in commencing his alphabet, he may be able by a few months of patient application to read his Testament. In a village therefore, but few may be sometimes found willing to avail themselves of the privileges of instruction. But an assembly of three or

¹ Some useful hints on various miscellaneous departments of the Ministry, may be found in "The Country Clergyman's Advice to his Flock." By Rev. William Mudge. (Hatchards and Seeleys.)

four is well worth our regular attention. If sufficient numbers of different ages can be collected to form into classes, the lads and the adults should, as far as possible, be separated. The Testament lessons will furnish an interesting course of questioning; and even the earlier lessons, drawn from the most simple contents of the sacred volume, will be replete with personal application. This department will furnish employ for the office of Helpers, with much relief to the Minister, and no small advantage to his fellow-labourers. Where confidence has been gained, and opportunities are favourable, a class might be formed on the Sunday for more direct instruction, either between the hours of service, or at any more convenient time of the day. The opportunities thus afforded for spiritual instruction; the employment furnished for the leisure hour (which otherwise might have been spent in idleness or sin); and the beneficial results to the domestic œconomy from a more intelligent acquaintance with relative duties and obligations, render this system peculiarly important. The general success (much facilitated by works expressly written for this purpose)¹ is highly encouraging; especially where the love of the sacred volume is the principle of perseverance. Many, whose scanty knowledge of its contents has flowed from the uncertain kindness of others, have thus been enabled to exercise themselves with most grateful delight and improvement in an immediate access to this unsearchable treasure.

A parochial library, where practicable, is an important appendage to the Pastoral system. The capacity of reading communicated to old and young, lays upon

¹ The Bristol Adult Spelling Book, sold by Mason, Paternoster Row, from its excellent type, and admirable selection of Scripture Lessons, will answer all the desired purposes.

us a weighty responsibility. Sound principle and Christian influence are especially needed to give a right direction to this new medium of intelligence, which otherwise will become a channel of vain curiosity and idleness—probably also of infidelity and sin—a field for the activity of Satan instead of a blessing to our people. ‘But’ (as Mr. Newton observed) ‘One proposes to fill a bushel with *tares*; now if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts.’ A store therefore of valuable instruction, adapted to the different gradations of intelligence and religious impressions, would be extensively useful, as a preservative from poisonous influence, and an excitement of general interest. With the admission of a few works of general information, the complexion of the library should however be distinctly evangelical, practical, and popular—formed upon the basis of the Divine aphorism—“One thing is needful.”¹ A payment of a penny, or at most of two pence, a quarter, would not be felt by the poorest of our people, while it would give them a sort of interesting property in it, and accumulate a trifling fund for fresh additions to the catalogue, which should be widely made known. A ledger should be kept for the entry of the names of the books and subscribers, and of the period when their subscriptions become due, or are paid. The times of exchange and distribution, and the limit of the detention of the books, should be definitely fixed, and strictly observed. Sunday distribution is objectionable; as, besides the time that would be employed in the arrangements, it would be the means of circulating works of too light a cast for the spiritual edification of the Sabbath, as well as others, excellent in their

¹ Bickersteth’s *Christian Student* (ch. xv.) will furnish a valuable selection for this purpose.

kind, but unsuitable to the sacredness of that holy day. The books, if well covered with brown paper, will sustain for a considerable time the rough handling, to which they will be exposed ; at the same time that a forfeit should be exacted for injury or loss, as well as for unreasonable detention beyond the fixed bounds.

The advantages also of Cottage Readings must not be omitted in this detail. Our Lord's public Ministry extended beyond the precincts of the synagogue, to every concourse of people. In strict conformity therefore with the spirit of this example, we cannot but suggest the importance of improving familiar opportunities for collective instruction of our people. In every parish there are many, who from bodily infirmity or from other causes, are excluded from the sphere of the pulpit Ministry, and who need, not merely general or individual conversations upon spiritual subjects, but distinct expositions of the word of God. Nor is this plan less useful to the poor generally, as enabling us to give those free and popular expositions, which are scarcely consistent with the dignity of the pulpit, while they are most important mediums of conveying correct views of truth to the uninstructed mind. 'No one,' (as has been justly observed by a most competent judge) 'but those accustomed to question the poor, or to be questioned by them, can form an idea of what by way of explanation they require. It is not only "line upon line, and precept upon precept" they need ; but it is almost word by word, and letter by letter.'¹ This mode of instruction will admit of considerable diversity of application. In an advanced state of knowledge or mutual

¹ Parochial Duties illustrated, pp. 16, 17.

confidence, the catechetical mode has been applied with much interest and edification. In a less matured state, a spirit of inquiry and excitement has been maintained by exercises in the Scripture field—proposing subjects for successive readings, and illustrating them by Scripture parallels. In more ordinary cases, familiar reading and exposition of a course of Scripture (perhaps preferable to unconnected portions), commenced and concluded with prayer, will furnish the plan, and fill up the outlines. The evenings only allow the attendance of men upon these meetings. Women (except in the manufacturing districts) may be collected during the day. The time, however, should be fixed with all possible consideration of convenience, and should be considered on our part as an engagement of regular occurrence and of paramount obligation. This œconomical system concentrates a large portion of our parochial visitation; while its orderly formality shuts out many interruptions which belong to domiciliary visits. Care however must be taken, that attendance upon these readings does not compensate for the self-indulgent neglect of the house of God; instead of sharpening the appetite for the Sabbath Ministrations. Frequently a peculiar blessing has attended these simple assemblies of the poor; which perhaps, from their freedom and confidence, may be considered an appropriate work and labour of love for the Minister's wife.

As the last particular in this lengthened detail, may be mentioned *the excitement of an interest in the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom*, as collaterally helpful to our work. Missionary and Bible Associations, especially the former, deal much in affecting and encouraging facts; though in the latter case it too frequently happens (unless the claims of the heathen

are strongly pressed) that the subscription proceeds no further than the purchase of a good Bible at a cheap cost. The principles upon which these Associations are formed are—the imparting of interesting information, and the inculcation of evangelical motives. For the former, the monthly publications of the Societies will furnish ample materials. The latter will be drawn in rich abundance from the word of God. The positive command of Christ¹—his dying love—the value and perishing condition of the soul—the nearness of eternity—the “sure word of prophecy,” as indicative of the purposes of God respecting his church—and the high privilege of being “fellow-workers with him”—all will combine to work with powerful constraint. The regularity of system should be introduced as far as possible into these Associations, especially in the collecting department; which should be managed weekly, (where circumstances allow of it,) and used as a medium of distributing information, and maintaining the tone of interest, as well as of gathering the contributions.² Monthly, or at least quarterly, meetings must be considered an important component part of the system. Singing, prayer, select reading from the most interesting sources of information—personal application and excitement grounded upon it—concluding with Scripture reading or exposition, and prayer, will form an assembly of our people, with much parochial interest and effect, as well as with effective influence upon the general cause of Christ.³

¹ Mark xvi. 15.

² The Writer heard of a Collector who gave a most satisfactory explanation of the interest and success of her employment—ascribing it to her conscientious adherence to two rules—regularity of collecting, and commencing her work periodically in prayer—the one marking the mechanism, the other forming the living principle, of the system.

³ For a beautiful specimen of meetings for these purposes, long

In these institutions the elements of vital religion are cherished in the subjugation of the natural principle of selfishness to that "charity that seeketh not her own;" in the awakening of a spirit of self-denial, pity, and intercession; and in a deepened sense of privileges, obligations, and responsibilities; so that the offering cast into the sacred treasury (though by no means to be despised) constitutes but a small proportion of the benefit derived: and thus the endeavour to diffuse the Gospel abroad is closely connected with its enlarged influence within our own spheres.

In concluding this extended survey of the Pastoral Ministry, the Writer would guard against attaching too much to the mere mechanism of the work, and would strongly press the point, that, whatever be our diligence in this department, we can only be blessed, as we are faithful in delivering, according to the light given to us, the whole message of God. He would however at the same time express his strong conviction, that the full exhibition of a Scriptural Ministry, combined with diligent labour in the Pastoral work, is the medium, through which the Spirit of God will produce among us an extension of true religion, which for explicitness, durability, and consistency, will abide the day of trial, and cause even the enemies of the Gospel to "see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and that the Holy One of Israel hath created it."¹

It is not however an exclusive interest in any department that is recommended, but a combined regard before they were known among us, see *Memoirs of Oberlin*, pp. 178, 179, lately published,—a most interesting sketch of Pastoral Biography.

¹ Isaiah xli. 20.

and concentrated attention to the whole work ; making it our study and prayer to be inwardly satisfied with nothing short of the Scriptural standard, nor to be contented without earnest longings, and constant advance towards that standard. In every department we may confidently expect that our labours will be instrumentally blessed to the objects of our care, wherever faith is the principle, and prayer the spirit, of our work ; and where the moving principle is acted out in self-denial, diligence, simplicity, and perseverance. While however we do not suffer our energies to stagnate, we must be careful not to attempt too many plans at once—not more, than we have a reasonable hope of sustaining ; and especially not more, than is consistent with a primary reference to our personal communion with God, and preparation for our public work. Yet by regularity ; doing one thing at a time ; allowing a pause ; by short exercises ; and by such prudence as is consistent with zeal, (not letting a variety of exercises carry us beyond our strength,) much more may be done than is commonly imagined.

EN TOTTOIS ΙΣΘΙ.—1 TIM. IV. 15.



PART VI.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.



PART VI.¹

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

It may be profitable to shut up this immensely momentous and interesting subject, with an attempt to recal a few of the exercises of our mind, and to concentrate them in some fixed and permanent impressions. Just views of the Gospel, and elevated views of our office, habitually realized, are most conducive to our personal and Ministerial proficiency; tending at once to excite, support, and direct us. Thus while the Minister, from the views of his responsibility, is filled with the deepest humiliation, he is driven to view the Saviour in all his excellency and glory. He will often say—‘Where should I have been, if I could not look to him, whose “blood cleanseth from all sin?”’ In addressing also his people, he will thus be led to great tenderness of heart in speaking to them of their sins; and be ready to sit at the feet of the least and lowest of them, while he executes his Divine commission towards them. And how will he speak of the Saviour? Like one who feels his own need of mercy, and who sees the sufficiency of his adorable Lord for

¹ To maintain these recollections, the Writer is happy to recommend in this place an interesting and valuable compilation—‘The Christian Minister’s Pocket Companion, by Rev. W. Shuttleworth.’ (Holdsworth and Ball.)

the chief of sinners, and the glorious work that he has undertaken for him; he will set forth this enlivening subject with a richness, fulness, confidence, and joy, which, if he has learnt from the Scriptures, he has no less learnt from his own experience. Thus is he humbled, but not discouraged; and while he lies low, he is lifted up by a "grace," that "is sufficient for him," and sustained by a "strength," that "is made perfect in" his "weakness."¹ Thus he is weeping, yet rejoicing—encouraged, thankful, devoted, happy.

However partial views of the Christian Ministry may, by eclipsing the prospects of faith, make our "hands hang down" in our work, we are persuaded that the sober calculation and enlarged apprehension of faith, will thus substantiate before us the full support of the Gospel; will draw forth the expression of our present gratitude; and result in continued and fresh excitement in the world of everlasting praise.

But that we may maintain our apprehensions of the work in practical and abiding influence—the Writer would expand a few questions, which the course of this survey has suggested for his own conviction, and which he would respectfully submit for the consideration of his honoured and beloved brethren.

I. *Do we honour our work?* The deepest spirit of personal humiliation well consists with elevated views of the sacred function.² When God would allure his people to return by the richest prospect of blessing—he sets before them—not the promise of temporal prosperity and aggrandisement (this had been found ineffectual to constrain their hearts to his service)—but the *gift of "pastors after his heart, who*

¹ See 2 Cor. xii. 9.

² Comp. Eph. iii. 8.

should feed them with knowledge and understanding."¹ If then a Minister is thus the most important gift of God to his Church, how high is the obligation, that lies upon him to "*magnify his office!*"² And this we do—*when Christ is the inspiring principle of our Ministrations*—not one subject among the rest, but that which involves the rest, and gives to them their proper life and interest. It is "*the truth as it is in Jesus*"³—as he is the centre of every line—that is the glory of the Christian Ministry. 'Let Jesus Christ' (said the excellent Matthew Henry) 'be all in all. Study Christ—preach Christ—live Christ.'⁴ Let us sink ourselves to exalt our Master.⁵ It was said of Ignatius, that he carried Christ about with him in his heart; 'and this I will say—if to represent a glorious Christ to the view, the love, and the admiration of all people, be the grand intention of your life—if you are exquisitely studious, that the holiness and yet the gentleness of Christ may shine in your conversation—if in your public discourses you do with rapture bring in the mention of Christ in every paragraph, and on every occasion where he is to be spoken of—and if, in your private conversation, you contrive to insinuate something of his glories and praises, whenever it may be decently introduced—finally, if, when you find that a glorious Christ is the more considered and acknowledged by your means, you exclaim—'Lord! this is my desired happiness'—truly you then live to good purpose.'⁶

We magnify our office also by an *exhibition of the spirit of our commission*. The high honour to which

¹ Jer. iii. 12—15.

² Rom. xi. 13.

³ Eph. iv. 21.

⁴ Life, p. 122. Compare sermon on John xiv. i. Miscel. Works, pp. 581—583.

⁵ See John iii. 30.

⁶ Mather's Essays to do Good, 113, 114.

we are called, is to give a just representation—not only of the doctrine we preach—but of His person, in whose name we preach. Whatever talents we may possess—if they be not made subservient to this grand purpose of expressing the dignity and humility, “the meekness and gentleness, the self-denial, zeal, and love of our Divine Master, they will bear the awful stamp of unprofitableness at the day of account. Like our Heavenly Pattern therefore, let us display before the world a manifest elevation above it—uninfluenced by its smiles—unmoved by its frowns. Let it be seen and read of all men, that we “seek not theirs, but them”¹—that “in all things we approve ourselves as the Ministers of God,”²—having our souls animated, excited, and filled with our work—making it the one absorbing concern—feeling the insignificance of every thing in comparison with it—giving it the lead in every pursuit—concentrating upon it the best and most steady efforts of self-denial and love—and manifesting that sympathising tenderness of heart, which bespeaks a sense of its responsibility. This high tone of Ministerial character grounded upon the permanent basis of personal religion will never fail to command respect. In this spirit George Herbert was ready to say, when dissuaded from the

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 14.

² 2 Cor. vi. 4. The following lines exhibit the primitive simplicity of their well known Author.

‘ Give me the priest these graces shall possess—
 Of an ambassador the first address—
 A father’s tenderness—a shepherd’s care—
 A leader’s courage, which the cross can bear—
 A ruler’s awe—a watchman’s wakeful eye—
 A pilot’s skill, the helm in storms to ply—
 A fisher’s patience—and a labourer’s toil—
 A guide’s dexterity, to disembroil—
 A prophet’s inspiration from above—
 A teacher’s knowledge—and a Saviours love.

BISHOP KENN.

Ministry, as to him a degrading employment—
 ‘ Though the iniquity of the times has made the sacred name of priest contemptible, yet I will labour to make it honourable, by consecrating all my learning, and all my poor abilities, to advance the glory of that God that gave them.’¹ Such also was Henry Martyn’s spirit of holy abasement and exultation. ‘ Blessed be God,’ said he—‘ *I feel myself to be his Minister.*’

II. *Do we feel the responsibility of our work?*
 Surely each of us may well say—‘ *I am doing a great work.*’² And indeed an affecting, though not an overwhelming, conviction of its dignity and difficulty, is eminently serviceable to check a vain, indolent, and careless mind; to excite us to the improvement of all necessary gifts and graces; to call forth earnest supplications in a matter so plainly above human strength; to exercise our entire dependence on Christ for guidance, assistance, and success; to preserve us against impertinent diversions from our work;³ and to make us deeply solicitous about its success. Nor is it less important as a ground of encouragement in our work—as arguing high thoughts of our Great Master; a firm belief of the truth and weight of our message; a freedom from secular ends; an humble, serious, tender, and prepared heart; a readiness to acknowledge our deficiencies, to improve our helps, to be earnest in prayer, to wait in expectation of Divine influence, to watch against all hinderances, and to render to God the honour of all our success—and even of all due preparation and diligence.

May we not then inquire—What is our personal sympathy with this awful sense of responsibility? How

¹ Walton’s Life of Herbert.

² Neh. vi. 3.

³ See Neh. vi. 3. ut supra.

are we affected by the Scriptural warnings—enough to “make both the ears of every” watchman “that heareth them to tingle?”¹ How by the spirit of our Ordination service? than which (as Bishop Burnet justly remarks) ‘nothing in any office is so serious and so solemn’²—as exhibiting us in both parts of our weighty business—as the mouth of God to the people, and the mouth of the people to God. Do we feel this *responsibility in regard to our care and diligence*? Is not Ministerial diligence as necessary for our salvation as Christian diligence for our people? The most regular course of external service or irreproachable conduct will not meet the emergency, without a deep sense of the “necessity laid upon us.” The ransom found for immortal souls shows at once their infinite value and their solemn charge. What could be purchased only by the blood of the Son of God must be worth the labours of a thousand generations. Nor can the murder of a fellow-creature bear any comparison with “the voice of the blood” of our brother’s soul “crying” for vengeance “from the ground.” What fervent exercises of Christian sympathy—perhaps the strongest evidences of our Ministerial call—flow from a just sense of Ministerial responsibility! Mr. Brown was often deprived of a night’s rest by his tender and oppressive anxiety;³

¹ Ezek. iii. xxxiii. xxxiv. Zech. xi. 17.

² Past. Care, ch. vi. Comp. Bishop Porteus’s Charges, 1790. Comber mentions a prayer for a Minister in an old Gallican form of ordination—‘that he may tremble for all the people committed to his care; remembering that all their souls are to be required at the watchman’s hand.’

³ Life and Remains, p. 28. ‘When a man is sensibly affected with the value of souls, with the manner of their redemption, and with the price paid for them; and is well acquainted with the New Testament, in which all this is plainly set forth; as he will never want matter for the best sermons, so he will never want arguments sufficient to convince his hearers of his own heart

and, did young Ministers cherish this impression of their office, they would have deeper views of their awful engagements; and, instead of desiring extensive spheres of service, they would be more sensible of the solemn charge of a single soul.¹

How do we feel *with regard to our talents?* They were given to us on account; neither to waste on sin, nor to slumber in indolence, nor to concentrate in selfishness—but to “occupy” in our Master’s service for the benefit of our people.’² Are our “gifts stirred up,” our graces exercised—our opportunities improved to the uttermost?

How again do we feel *with regard to our preaching?* How solemn and affecting is the Apostle’s description of his own sense of pulpit responsibility—“by *manifestation of the truth, commending himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God!*”³ How deeply was he penetrated with the subject of his commission; with the object in his view; and with the recollection of the Omniscient witness of his conduct. Truth—conscience—the presence of his God—thoughts the most weighty and impressive filled his whole soul. Well would it be for us thus to realize the responsibility of the true character of our office—as not the magistrate—the statesman—the legislator—the wise or prudent man—the moralist—the poet—the man of feeling—or even the minister of the law—but the ambassador of Christ, ‘sent to man, the sinner—not the partial, but the total sinner—not the impoverished, but the ruined—not to man hurt by sin, but to man dead in sin—not man to be repaired, but to be made—

being touched with the importance of the subject.’ Bishop Wilson’s Parochialia.

¹ Bishop Andrews engraved on his episcopal seal the memorable words—“Who is sufficient for these things?”

² Luke xix. 13—26.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

not to be rectified, but to be created.'¹ How important is the recollection, that we bring to man nothing that is truly valuable, without an acquaintance with his true character, his lost condition, and his only solid hopes for eternity!

How does our example speak—a most responsible part of our office? 'What Bishop' or Minister 'can forbear trembling, seeing himself engaged by Jesus Christ himself to be like an "angel" pure, spiritual, in a constant application to men by labour, and to God by prayer—and like a "star" full of light, elevated above the earth, fixed to his sphere which is his "church," incessantly moving in it, and continually diffusing his influences below?'² Do we realize the responsibility of our office as "the salt of the earth?"³ Alas! sometimes do we not rather seem to assist the putrefaction than preserve from it? Do we remember the importance of shielding our office from contempt by the display of a pattern of Christian consistency?⁴ Do we consider the delicate exact attention belonging to our function—like, the female character, requiring not only restraint within the strict bounds of propriety, but the most remote distance from the bounds even of suspicion—a restriction, which however burdensome it may appear, is a most important obligation and effectual support to the main designs of the Ministry?

¹ Budd's Sermon's before Church Missionary Society.

² Quesnel on Rev. i. 19, 20. 'Vouchsafe, Lord' (adds this pious expositor) 'to send such "angels," and cause such "stars" as these to shine in thy church'—'So holy is our employment, that were our souls as pure as cherubs, as zealous and active as the blessed spirits that are above, we should yet have reason to cover our faces, and to be swallowed up in a deep sense of our own insufficiency for these things.'—Scougal's Sermon on the Importance and Difficulty of the Ministerial Function.

³ Matt. v. 13.

⁴ See 1 Tim. iv. 12.

The responsibility of the temporal concerns of the nation, or even the holding up of the pillars of the earth, bears no proportion to the tremendous weight of the charge of immortal souls. Ministers are not "visited after the visitation of all men." Nothing is distributed to them upon the common scale of calculation, or according to the general balance of the Divine dispensations. "We are" (says the Apostle) "made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men."¹ We are denied the privilege of perishing alone. We cannot singly save ourselves; nor can we save ourselves at all, except (as Bishop Wilson reminds us) 'by labouring to save others.'² What means then the frequent caution or charge of excessive zeal, when our own consciences must tell us, that—did we but realize the value of the soul—were we suitably impressed with the love of the Saviour, or with a sense of our obligations—we should not minister as we do—that we have reason to be ashamed of every sermon we preach—and perhaps to tremble in the very best of them; lest we be charged with slighting the truth of God, and with the guilt of the blood of our people. And are there none of us, who should present to their minds the fearful prospect, of their hearers sinking successively into the arms of death, through Ministerial negligence, unwarned, as well as unprepared; and of themselves following after them, overwhelmed with the deep damnation of the blood of their souls?

Oh! what are the bitterest of earthly sorrows—what the curse of an ungodly world—what the torture of the martyr's stake—compared with the unutterable, eternal, sting of unfaithfulness to God, and to im-

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 9.

² See his *Sacra Privata*.

mortal souls? The anticipation of the day of account—solemn to all—is inexpressibly so to us. How solemn the peal, which the passing bell—that useful memento of judgment—rings in our ears! Another account is carried in before the bar of our Judge—an account linked with our own, and crowded with sins of Ministerial omission and unfaithfulness! Can we then forbear the impassioned deprecation of guilt—“ Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God? ”¹ Can we forget, that the Minister is the man of all others, who needs the superabounding mercy of God? Can we be ignorant of—have we no sympathy with—the thrice-repeated flight of Ambrose from the Episcopate—the compulsory ordination of Gregory Nazianzen—the deprecation of the Apostolic Bishop of Hippo—(Quid! vultis ut peream?) and the deep distress of Chrysostom, counting his elevation a judgment upon the Church?²—If there was a mixture of superstition with this shrinking humility—“ forgive them this wrong; ” and let us condescend to learn something of them, which they are well able to teach—to temper our more enlightened views of faith with

¹ Psalm li. 14. Chrysostom's words on this subject (Scougal declares) ‘ are so terrible, that I tremble to put them into English; and yet ’—adds he with a deep-toned impressiveness—‘ if a man should speak fire, blood, and smoke; if flames should come out of his mouth instead of words; if he had a voice like thunder, and an eye like lightning, he could not sufficiently represent the dreadful account that an unfaithful pastor shall make.’ Scougal's Sermon, ut supra. See also some striking thoughts in Dwight's Sermons, Vol. ii. 444.

² In the first and most blessed times of Christianity, those only were then judged worthy the Ministry, whose quiet and meek spirit did make them look upon that sacred calling with an humble adoration, and fear to undertake it; which indeed requires such great degrees of humility, and labour, and care, that none but such were then thought worthy of that celestial dignity; and such only were then sought out, and solicited to undertake it.’ Walton's Life of Donne.

a portion of that "weakness, and fear, and much trembling,"¹ which they so vividly portrayed.²

III. *Do we earnestly desire and expect success in our work?* Who is there that prays—or that stirs up his people to pray for success—as if we suitably realized its unspeakable importance? Yet there can scarcely be any hope of success without a deep and anxious concern for it. 'If you would prosper in your work' (says Baxter), 'be sure to keep up earnest desires and expectations of success. If your heart be not set upon the end of your labours, and you long not to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in this hope, you are not likely to see much fruit of it.'³ "The ostrich," indeed, leaveth her eggs in the earth," careless what may befall them, "because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted unto her understanding."⁴ But what husbandman would sow the seed without some anxiety and expectation of the harvest? And who can help admiring the conduct of faithful Eliezer, who would neither eat nor drink, until he

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 3, with 2 Cor. xii. 9.

² The celebrated Rutherford, when petitioning the assembly against his removal from Anworth, the beloved sphere of his parochial labours, to the Divinity chair, used as one plea—"Let it be considered, if one, who dare not be able to answer to Christ for a lesser charge, should be burdened with a more weighty." Murray's Life of Rutherford, p. 152.

Leighton tells us of one reason for his resignation of the see of Glasgow—"The sense I have of the dreadful weight of whatsoever charge of souls, and all kind of spiritual inspection over all people, but much more over ministers; and there is"—added he—"an episcopal act, that is above all others formidable to me—*ordaining ministers.*" Pearson's Life, cxv. The anxiety of sleepless nights seems to be implied in the Apostle's emphatic term, *αγρυπνεσθαι* (Heb. xiii. 17.) Were not the Apostle's "watchings often" (*εν αγρυπνιαις* 2 Cor. vi. 5.) probably connected with the deep intensity of his Ministerial anxiety?

³ Reformed Pastor and his Life of Alleine.

⁴ Job xxxix. 14—17. with John x. 12, 13.

saw how his master's business would speed? ¹ But how often are we satisfied with a creditable performance of our duties, without a deep concern for the success of our work, and yearning compassion for the multitudes, hardening themselves under the sound of the Gospel! ² To aim intensely and simply at one main object; to count every soul a kingdom; and to be more delighted to save a soul than to win a crown—this is the true spirit of the Ministry. This was the spirit of our great Master—the satisfaction he anticipated from “the travail of his soul”—“the joy that was set before him” ³ This was the sustaining desire of the Apostle under his wearisome labours. ⁴ Oh! then, let us like men and Ministers of God, thirst insatiably for the salvation of souls. ⁵ We must be

¹ Gen. xxiv. 33.

² Mr. Ottee, ejected from Beccles, Suffolk, if he preached five or six sermons without hearing of any good effect upon some or other of his hearers, was greatly dejected, and very fervent in prayer for further success.

³ Isa. liii. 11. Heb. xii. 2.

⁴ See Rom. i. 13.

⁵ Bishop Patrick informs us, in his interesting account of the learned John Smith—“that he had resolved (as he one day told me) very much to lay aside other studies, and to *travail in the salvation of men's souls* after whose good he most earnestly thirsted.” Alleine “was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls: and to this end he poured out his very heart in prayer and in preaching. He “imparted not the gospel of God only, but his own soul.” His supplications and his exhortations many times were so affectionate, so full of holy zeal, life, and vigour, that they quite overcame his hearers. He melted over them, so that he mollified, and sometimes dissolved the hardest hearts.” Mr. Ward of Ipswich, an eminent puritan divine, asks—“If God were to say to a Minister, as he said to Solomon—“Ask what I shall give thee?”—what should he desire, either before or more than this—namely, a large portion of that magnetical virtue, whereby Peter and Paul, and other primitive preachers, drew many thousand souls to the knowledge of Jesus?” “How many faithful Ministers” (says Baxter in his Preface to Alleine's Alarm) “have I lately known, who have lived in pining poverty and want; and yet, if they could but have truly said”—Lord, “*the sermons, which I privately and in danger have preached, have won many*

utterly dead to any high sense of our calling, if we can roll along a course of years in the responsible relation of Pastor, without inquiry or concern, whether our people thrive or decline under our Ministry. Let us not be satisfied with evidence of personal attachment to ourselves, without one beating pulse of love to our Master. Acceptance with man is to us an empty bubble—success in conversion is every thing. Let nothing therefore content us short of real fruit. Some outward restraint or reformation may be wrought ; but while the heart is uninfluenced, the principle of sin remains in full vigour, and no real or permanent advantage is gained. “ The axe is ” not “ laid to the root of the tree.” The branches only are lopped off, and pruned, though perhaps in some varied forms, for greater luxuriance. The fountain is not dried up ; only the course of the waters is diverted into another channel. The *main design* therefore of the Ministry is left unaccomplished. One soul converted to God is better than thousands merely moralized, and still sleeping on in their sins. The object as well as the recompence of our work is

souls to thee’—it would have made all their burden easy.’ ‘ In my preaching ’ (said the celebrated Bunyan) ‘ I could not be satisfied, unless some fruits did appear in my work. If I were fruitless, it mattered not who commended me : but if I were fruitful, I cared not, who did condemn.’ ‘ I would think it a greater happiness ’ (said Matthew Henry, in the view of his ordination) ‘ to gain one soul to Christ, than mountains of silver and gold to myself : ’ adding, in his *dread of the misery of ministerial unfruitfulness*—‘ If God suffers me to labour in vain (though I *should get hundreds a year by my labour*), it would be the constant grief and trouble of my soul ; and if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction,’ and ‘ *I would rather beg my bread from door to door, than undertake this great work.*’ Dr. Doddridge wrote thus to a friend—‘ I long for the conversion of souls more sensibly than any thing besides. Methinks I could not only labour, but die for it with pleasure—The love of Christ constraineth me.’

to have fellowship with the angels in "gathering together the elect of God."¹

Nor must we tamely acquiesce in the admission of Ministerial success being not always visible;² or live upon undefined hopes; or too indulgently console ourselves in the assurance of personal acceptance, in the event of a total failure. For, though the reward is measured by labour, not by success, and is still "with our God, though Israel be not gathered;"³ yet the promises, pleaded and waited for in the diligence and perseverance of faith, warrant the expectation of a *measure of apparent fruit*. Mr. Robinson solemnly reminded his brethren—*The want of Ministerial success is a tremendous circumstance*. 'Search, ask'—added he—'if there be a cause, and when your seals are not broad and visible.'⁴ Acquiescence without inquiry is rather the slumber of indolence, than the quietness and resignation of faith. The Divine Sovereignty must indeed be fully acknowledged, but not pleaded in excuse for inertion; nor rested upon, except as a sustaining encouragement in conflict and difficulty. The Apostles, while they were ever ready to bow to this deep and mysterious exhibition of the Divine character, yet were full of distress and activity, or joy and praise, according as

¹ Matt. xxiv. 31.

² See Part ii. ch. 1.

³ See 1 Cor. iii. 8. Isa. xlix. 4, 5.

⁴ Visitation Sermon, pp. 36, 37. Most admirably Mr. Scott remarks—'When a man is in earnest, nothing will satisfy him but this. Others may be satisfied without success; they may go through a formal set of observances, and be contented; instead of examining their Ministry, and saying—"Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." If any thing but usefulness will satisfy us, I do not wonder that we are not useful. We must thank God for this and that thing, but nothing must satisfy us but the conversion of sinners. The least success in our profession is better than the greatest in any other.'—Sermon on Rom. xv. 29.

their Master's work was retarded or advanced.—While their faith was tranquil, their efforts were incessant.

IV. *Are we laying ourselves out for our work?* There is sometimes a heartlessness about us, most paralyzing to the activity of faith, and quenching to the faint spark of Ministerial zeal, and Christian love. Mr. Scott warns us against it, as ‘very dishonourable to the mercy and grace of the Gospel, and to his name, who commands his servants to *rejoice in hope.*’¹ Weariness of our work, when it seems at a low ebb of prosperity, is indeed much to be deprecated—still more so—the readiness to seek relief from present discouragement in self-indulgent studies or recreations. The fisherman under disappointment sits not down in despondency—much less does he direct his mind to any other employment—but exercises himself to inquire into the causes of his failure, and the best mode of obviating them; and girds himself for the next opportunity with the same glistening expectation. Thus must we, like the disciples, “at our Lord's command,” continue to “let down the net,” even though “we have toiled all night, and caught nothing.”² But is it ever too long a time to wait? It is under circumstances of discouragement that the blessedness of the work is most sensibly realized. It is then that experience teaches us, that its supports do not spring from sensible excitements, but must be wholly drawn from faith, and from the constraining love of an unseen Saviour. Our failure, therefore (as has been well observed) should ‘not be a cause for relaxation in diligence, or for despondency in spirit, or for remission in prayer. Let it rather be an argument for renewed energy, for greater zeal and earnestness.’³ Like the

¹ Scott's Life, p. 344.

² Luke v. 5.

³ Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 94.

ancient servants of God—enflamed by circumstances of discouragement,¹ let us be found in weeping tenderness of intercession before our God.² But let us remember, that prayer without exertion will subject us to his reproofs—“Wherefore criest thou unto me? Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face?”³

The axiom—‘Duties are ours—events are God’s’—is precisely that mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism, which constitutes the true Ministerial habit. It is, however, a maxim for rest in unvarying effort—not in slumbering supineness. Philip Henry assures us—‘The more we do, the more we may do in the service of God.’⁴ And therefore let us satisfy ourselves, that we are using all the means, and with all the earnestness, in our power—like men, filled with what Lord Shaftesbury was pleased to call—‘the heroic passion of saving souls?’ Let us inquire—Is nothing done defectively, or in a wrong spirit? Can we think of nothing more that might be done? Does “the trumpet give” either “an uncertain,” or a feeble,

* To relinquish or intermit parochial labour, because it is not attended with success, would be terribly inexcusable. Labour on; commit the matter to God; wait patiently; get a feeling of the bowels of Christ; and die, praying, Lord! pity the people.’ Adam’s Private Thoughts.

¹ Exod. xxxii. 19. Acts xiv. 14. xxii. 16.

² Lam. i. 4, Joel ii. 17. ³ Exod. xiv. 15. Josh. vii. 10.

⁴ Life, p. 53. The account given of Rutherford’s personal diligence may serve to illustrate this. ‘He was accustomed to rise every morning at three o’clock. The early parts of the day he spent in prayer, meditation, and study; and the remainder of it was devoted to his more public duties; to the visitation of the sick, the afflicted, and the dying, and to the examination and encouragement in godliness of the different families of his congregation.’ Murray’s Life, ut supra, p. 43. The Memoir of Dr. Payson of America, lately published, (Seeleys) gives a similar and most interesting sketch of one, who was ready to labour even to faintness in his Master’s service. We read indeed of an eminent Minister, who “for the work of Christ was nigh unto death.” (Phil. ii. 30.); yet we cannot but regard it as a temptation of Satan, when the servants of Christ are incited to a prodigal expenditure

“sound?”¹ What weekly provision is there for our flock—for those of them especially, who feel the intervals between the Sabbaths to be long? What is there, that shews our readiness to be “out of season,” as well as “in season, to watch in all things, to endure afflictions, to do the work of an Evangelist, to make full proof of our Ministry?”² Do our people mark, in our going in and out before them, a *daily* renewal of our Ordination vow, without reservation for our own ease and interest? Do we count the day lost, when something has not been either written, or said, or done, in our Master’s service? The fisherman, when not actually engaged in his employment, is mending his nets, or more or less exercised in preparing for his business. And thus might the intervals between our immediate work be filled up with the interest of study, conversation, or Christian intercourse, such as would afford us the benefit of relaxation, while it bears with at least indirect application upon our work. ‘Indeed’ (as Bishop Davenant justly remarks) ‘a good Minister is never less at leisure than when he seems to be so. Our people may think, that we have whole days for ease and indulgence, and that we have nothing to do, when we have left the house of God. But if we are

of health, strength, and spirits, by which the candle wastes immoderately while it burns, and its light is extinguished before the time. Their ends indeed are so sincere, their work so delightful, and their hearts so overflowing, that the discovery is often made too late of the advantage, which the kingdom of darkness derives from this premature removal of the candlestick from its place. At the same time a chastised transfusion of this burning zeal into our temperament would prove of essential service; and though we would dissuade from that overstretched exertion, which in most cases would be a speedy suicide; yet authentic records of extraordinary devotedness to the work are eminently calculated to resist the encroachments of self-indulgence, and to elevate our standard of Ministerial self-denial and devotedness.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 8.

² 2 Tim. iv. 2, 5.

what we ought to be, the conflict—I had almost said—the perpetual—but at least the daily and diligent—conflict of prayer, meditation, and study, lies upon us.”¹

We may indeed go through the outward routine of the Christian Ministry with respectability. But how different is it from that self-denying self-devotedness to this great work, which spiritualizes even our most cursory, and much more our stated, employment; which is constantly devising some plan for the benefit of our flock; and making it our great aim to elevate them to a higher standard of obligation and of privilege! It is the holy, humble, and laborious Ministry, concentrating doctrine, spirit, example, intensity of interest, and entire endeavour, and “striving according to the mighty power” of God,² that is the appointed instrument for the fulfilment of the Divine purposes. Mr. Scott well observes—that ‘Satan prevails as much by persuading Ministers to sit still, or merely to go on in the beaten round, without attempting any thing more, as in any other way.’³ For indeed, however great may be the qualifications of the present moment, they can never annul the “necessity that is laid upon

¹ Dav. in Col. ii. 1.

² Col. i. 29. Scarcely one word in our translation of this verse seems to answer the emphasis of the original in marking the Apostle’s determined devotedness to his work—*κοπιω—αγωνιζομενος—κατα την ενεργειαν αυτη—ενεργωμενην εν εμοι—εν δυναμει*—I labour even to weariness. I strive as in a conflict. I struggle according to the inward operation of Christ, working effectually in me with great and exceeding power. It seems (as Dr. Hammond remarks) as if ‘all the agonistical phrases in use among the ancient Grecians were culled out and scattered among his Epistles; fetched from Olympus to Zion, from Athens to Jerusalem; and all little enough to express the earnestness of the holy violence of his soul in this *καλος αγων*.’ Sermon entitled, *The Pastor’s Motto*.

³ Life, p. 213.

us," as debtors to our flock, and as "scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," to seek to excel in our work, and to acquire greater skill, richer stores, and sweeter unction for its all-important engagements. An aged Minister, when exhorted to be more sparing of himself, once observed—'When a man has loitered the best part of his day, and the evening draws on, he had need double his strokes.' And surely, all of us—with a livelier impression of the near conclusion of our work, and pondering its importance according to the worth of souls—should be more active in discovering, inventing, and improving from time to time some fresh point of contact with the souls dropping into eternity before our eyes—some new medium of more accurate acquaintance with their individual condition,¹ some closer intimacy with their false refuges, some nearer access to their affections, some sharper edge for the piercing of their consciences—that ultimately the Saviour might be honoured and reign in them, as his redeemed people. Many schemes may be devised for this purpose, of little outward display, but of powerful influence upon our public Ministrations. Of what avail is our knowledge (except to increase the awful balance at the day of

¹ Dr. Doddridge kept a memorandum book in his desk, in which he set down hints, as they occurred to him, of what might be done for the good of the congregation. At the close of every year he took a large and distinct view of its state, wrote some remarks upon it, and laid down rules for his future conduct in his relation to it.—Orton's Life, ch. v. 'Were the Lord to make me young again' (said the excellent Mr. Brown on his death-bed) 'I think I should study to devise some other means for the gaining of souls than those which I have used, and to prosecute them with more activity than ever I did.'—Life and Remains, p. 287. 'If an angel (said Cotton Mather) 'were in the flesh, as I am, and in such a post as mine, what methods would he use to glorify God!' One of Plato's qualifications for his disciple—*φιλοπονος*—(De Repub. Lib. vi.) illustrates the industry, interest, and labour of him, who would exhibit his whole heart fixed in the work of God.

account), if it be not sanctified to the work of God? As men of God consecrated to his special service, we must always be at work for God, as if our life was one continued moving on in the course of the Ministry, and our sweetest rest was found in his service. As a beloved friend of the Writer's once observed, (exemplifying unconsciously his own character,)—"The true pastor is so devoted to his parish, that his parish is to him in some sense the whole world. He should have no heart, as it were, for any thing else. His invention, and every faculty of the mind, should always be upon the stretch to discover and execute means for benefiting his parish." Indeed without this entire devotedness of mind and power to our work, how can we be said practically to listen to the Divine caution—"Take heed to the Ministry thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it?"¹

V. Does the Spirit of love characterize our Ministrations? Let us inquire generally, as to our interest in our work. "Not by constraint"—is the spirit of our office; at least by no other constraint than "the love of Christ."² Our duty should be our delight—our work our wages.³ Indeed even under depressing circumstances, the obligation of standing up as a witness for Christ, and the excitement to set forth his excellency to sinners, brings with them a sensible refreshment to our own souls; so that, when it is a labour of love, it is a most blessed service. Yet it may be often well to ask—What fellowship have we here with the experience of eminent servants of God?⁴

¹ Col. iv. 17.

² 1 Peter v. 2. with 2 Cor. v. 14.

³ 'I may conscientiously take the wages for the work, when I have a distinct consciousness, that I would do the work without the wages.' Adam's Private Thoughts.

⁴ 'I esteem the Ministry the most desirable employment in the world; and find that delight in it, and those advantages from it,

It has been truly remarked—that ‘justice can never be done to any profession, which is pursued with aversion or indifference. *Without loving his profession, no one can become an able and faithful Minister of the Gospel of Christ.* But to such, the love which David had for the priesthood, for its occupations and duties, will become the living principle of conduct. A faithful Minister will love his profession, for the sake of Him who founded it; for the sake of the church and brethren, for whom Christ died; and for the invaluable advantages which it possesses towards the acquisition of happiness here and hereafter.’¹ ‘A Minister’—observes a serious writer—‘who dislikes the business of his calling—who has not *even an ardent love for it*, must lead a very unpleasant life. He saunters away life in listlessness; he turns to his own

which I think hardly any other employment on earth could give me.’ Dr. Doddridge—‘Now after near forty years’ preaching of Christ, I think I would rather beg my bread all the labouring days of the week, for an opportunity of publishing the gospel on the Sabbath, than without such a privilege to enjoy the richest possessions on earth.’ Brown—‘Were God to present me’ (said this excellent man on his death-bed) ‘with the dukedom of Argyll, on the one hand, and the being a Minister of the gospel, with the stipend which I have had, on the other, so *pleasant hath the ministry been to me, notwithstanding all my weakness and fears of little success*, that I would instantly prefer the last.’—‘After nearly thirty-five years engagement as a Minister of the Gospel, I can declare to the honour of the Master whom I serve, that no moments, next to those of private communion with my God, are to be compared with those, in which I am preparing to bring before others the truths which I have enjoyed myself.’ Memoirs of Rev. W. Kingsbury.—‘I do not wish for any heaven upon earth, besides that of preaching the precious gospel of Jesus Christ to immortal souls. I wish for no service but the service of God, in labouring for souls on earth, and to do his will in heaven.—Henry Martyn. ‘A faithful Minister ought to be the happiest and most cheerful of human beings.’—Bishop Jebb. The same sentiment is expressed in the Bishop of Chester’s Charge, p. 29.

¹ Bishop Burgess’s Primary Charge to the Diocese of St. David’s, pp. 23—25.

proper functions with reluctance; he toils through them with distaste; he performs them ill, and is dissatisfied with himself, and, from this dissatisfaction, again performs them worse, and is more uneasy in his own feelings and reflections.¹ It is not necessary, that he should be distinguished by talent, or by ecclesiastical dignity or preferment; but that he should labour in his work from sincere love, is of the first moment.²

Let this inquiry also be more specific, with regard to our love to our people. The connexion between the Minister and his people, in its full extent of interest and responsibility, is too little considered and felt among us. A general concern on one side, and a respectful regard on the other, convey a very inadequate expression of the sacred and affectionate character of this cementing bond,³ But it is not easy to conceive of a Minister's usefulness—at least of his extensive usefulness—without a cordial love to his people. A powerful mind or fine imagination may command admiration, but love is the magnet of attrac-

¹ Gerard's Pastoral Care, p. 93. See some excellent remarks in Burnet's Pastoral Care, ch. vii.

² See Witsius 'De Vero Theologo.'

³ Bowles gives some judicious rules for the forming of this interesting bond. 1. Kindness of speech and manners, Eccl. x. 12. 2. Sympathy with the trials and perplexities of our people. 2 Cor. xi. 29. 3. Readiness to communicate to their necessities. Acts x. 38. 4. Condescension to their infirmities. 1 Cor. ix. 19—22. x. 33. 5. Social habits of intercourse, *with a strict regard to the main designs of our office.* Luke v. 30. xv. 2, 3. 6. Watching against incidental occasions of irritation. Further—to maintain this Pastoral union, he recommends—1. To avoid, as much as possible, worldly connexion of business with our people, as a fruitful source of contention, Jer. xv. 10. 2. In the necessary intercourse of this world with them, to have a careful guard over our own spirit. 3. To bury all remembrance of the ill-natured speeches or injuries, to which we may be exposed—in giving an ear or thought to which, we may embroil ourselves in endless and most hurtful disputes. Lib. i. c. 22.

tion that draws his people to himself. Let him bear them therefore upon his heart, like the High-Priest on his breast-plate.¹ Let him live with them as a father with his children. ‘*Bishops*’ (as Jerome reminded his friend) ‘*are not Lords, but Fathers.*’² The Pastoral work, without the habitual influence of this principle, is indeed a most severe task ; while the privileges connected with a faithful discharge of it are either wholly unknown or misconceived ; and the return of affectionate respect and assiduity, on the part of our people, is considered as the relic of Popish veneration, or the effect of interested motives or enthusiastic feelings. But, in truth, none but those who “watch for souls, as they that must give account,” can know the painful anxiety of the Christian Minister, “until Christ be formed in his people, the hope of glory ;” or understand his intense interest in superintending the various stages of their “growth unto the perfect man.”³

¹ Exod. xxviii. 29.

² Jer. ad Nepot.

³ The following interesting and accurate sketch will touch many a chord of Ministerial sympathy and excitement—‘How beautiful and holy in all its perfectness of obligation is the spiritual connexion which subsists between a faithful Minister of Christ and the flock, which he is appointed to feed with the pure word of God ! How many are the methods, by which that bond of affection may be more closely drawn ! How various are the ways, in which a faithful and vigilant Pastor may apply himself to the conscience of men, and promote their spiritual welfare ; administering instruction, reproof, consolation ; “becoming all things to all men, that he might by all means save some ;” always on the watch for opportunities of seasonably interposing the great truths and warnings of the gospel ; anxiously alive to the symptoms of religious improvement in his flock ; and looking at that, as his strong encouragement and rich reward ! Many an anxious care does he experience for the welfare of those, who are endeared to him by the sacred sympathies of spiritual affinity ; many a sorrow for failures, in which the world thinks he has no interest ; many a joy also for blessings, which he alone perceives descending upon the heads of those whom he loves in the Lord. And such a shepherd is not without a recompense, even in this world : “the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” Such, my brethren, were the apostles ; such were the first pastors and teachers of the

They cannot be safely left to grow up without food and instruction, on the strength of some supposed innate principle of life. Nor do they ever arrive at that state, which does not require all our watchfulness and care for their preservation. They need exhortation, not only in a careless and backsliding state, but (as was before observed¹) as the appointed means of maintaining Christian steadfastness, and of "going on unto perfection." Nor is there any feeling of parental anxiety, with which the experience of the Christian Minister does not sympathize.² Even needful reproof will be conveyed in parental language;³ and the general spirit of the Pastoral duty, when moulded upon the principles of the Gospel, will differ as widely from mere official advice or remonstrance, as the tender counsel of an affectionate father from the accurate tuition of a well-principled instructor.⁴ If indeed, on looking round upon our flock, we can see no one, who, in the language of the Apostle, "owes to us his soul,"⁵ we can have no conception

church of Christ; such have been many holy fathers of that church, who imbibed the true spirit of that gospel, which it is intended to uphold and propagate; and in proportion as all its Ministers, by the aid of that Spirit, who is promised to them as an abiding and sanctifying Spirit, can assimilate themselves to that perfect model of self-devotedness and disinterestedness; of ardent zeal for the salvation of mankind, and of singleness of intention, as preachers of the gospel only; in that proportion will they be "burning and shining lights" to illuminate and purify the world; and in that proportion will the kingdom of Christ on earth be set forward, and his great designs of mercy carried on towards their accomplishment.' Bishop Blomfield's *Lectures on the Acts*, pp. 114—116. Another sketch of similar beauty may be found in the *Bishop of Winchester's Charge*, pp. 56—58. ¹ Pp. 504, 505.

² Ambrose could say to his people—'Non minus vos diligo, quos genui ex Evangelio, quam si suscepissem conjugio.' *De Offic.* Lib. i. c. 5. In the same spirit the primitive Bishop Wilson remarks—'He that considers himself as the Father of the flock, will not forget, with what mildness, tenderness, and love a Father treats his children.' *Stowell's Life*, p. 286.

³ See 1 Cor. iv. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.* 15, 16.

⁵ *Philemon* 19.

of the endearing bond of attachment, that unites a faithful shepherd to his deeply indebted flock. But to prove the existence of such a bond would be a most superfluous task. Every parochial visit reminds the affectionate Minister of its happy influence, binding him a willing servant to his Divine Master, and to the church for which he died.¹

Now let us apply the Apostle's description of his own Ministerial feelings to our experience. His Epistles to the Philippians and Thessalonians present a most exciting picture of Ministerial endearment, in his thankfulness for his people, his prayers for them, and delight in them. Mark his continual "longings to see" his different flocks, for their mutual enlargement and comfort. "Taken from them," sometimes "in presence," never "in heart," his return to them is the subject of his constant prayers, in which he entreats them to unite with him.² Nor could he meanwhile be satisfied, without hearing of their state and progress, and even sending messengers for that purpose; as if good tidings of them were the life of his own life and an excitement to his continual thankfulness.³ He could not forbear telling them, how his "mouth was opened," and "his heart enlarged" towards them—that he was looking with a father's expectations to

¹ Rutherford's Pastoral Life furnishes a beautiful illustration of this subject. He could assure his flock, that they were the objects of his 'tears, cares, fear, and daily prayers—that he laboured among them early and late'—and (to use his strong language) 'my witness is above, that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two salvations to me.' Letters, part i. sect. 2. They, in their turn, in petitioning against his removal from them, declared, that 'it hath pleased God so to evidence his calling here, by His blessing on his labours amongst us; the consequence whereof we find to be a mutual union of our hearts betwixt him and us.'—Murray's Life, ut supra, Appendix, F.

² Rom. i. 9—12. xv. 30—32. 1 Thess. ii. 17.

³ Phil. ii. 19. 1 Thess. iii. 1—11.

be "somewhat filled with their company"—and (as if a father's tenderness was inadequate to convey the overflow of his heart) that he was ready to "cherish them, as a nursing-mother her children;" being "affectionately desirous to impart even his own soul to them."¹ His habit of carrying them always "in his heart, to die and live with them;" his anxiety during his imprisonment, employed more on their welfare than on his own life; nay, even his readiness to be detained from the immediate presence of his Redeemer for their sakes, and the joy with which he anticipated the offering of his life "upon the sacrifice and service of their faith,"² are far beyond our standard of Ministerial sympathy. He was ever willing, for the more effectual attainment of his object, to wave the right of command for the language of entreaty.³ His disinterested love forgot all personal injury, and all occasions of resentment, in his grand object of his people's restoration to the simplicity of the Gospel.⁴ Nay, he was willing to lose their affections for himself, if he could but win them to Christ; overcoming ungrateful returns with the continued overflowing of affection; "seeking not theirs, but them; very gladly spending and being spent for them, though the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved."⁵ Glad was he even of his own weakness, if only they were strong, having his mind

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 11. Rom. xv. 24. 1 Thess. iii. 7, 8.

² 2 Cor. vii. 3. Col. ii. 1, 2. iv. 7, 8. Phil. i. 21—24. ii. 17.

³ Philemon 8, 9.

⁴ Gal. iv. 11—15.

⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 12—24. 'This motto of an Apostle ("I seek not yours, but you") is transmitted to us with his Apostleship, to be transcribed, not into our rings and seals of orders, but into our hearts; there, if you please, to be engraven with a diamond; set, as the stones in our ephod, the jewels in our breast-plate, gloriously legible to all that behold us.'—Dr. Hammond's Pastor's Motto, ut supra.

absorbed with one great desire—"their perfection."¹ Whether or not the Apostle was raised up as a Pastoral model to his successors in the Ministry—this at least is the true spirit of the office, embodied, personified, and moulded to real life and experience. For be it remembered, that this care, solicitude, and tenderness, expressed in prayers, tears, continual sacrifices of personal ease and indulgence, and frequent exposure to imminent peril,² were not the effect of direct miracle or inspiration, but the effusions of a heart, lamenting over the miserable condition of perishing sinners; yearning over his own children in the faith; glowing with the love of Christ, and filled with his Spirit.

The Writer knows not when he has felt more sensibly his almost infinite distance from the Scriptural standard of obligation, than while sketching out this imperfect outline of what a Minister ought to be, and what he might be. For let it not be supposed, that these are graces and duties peculiar either to the Apostle or the Apostolic age; they are rather the exhibition of the standard, which all, who have pledged themselves to the sacred Ministry, would do well habitually to contemplate; and the practical influence of which upon their own Ministrations will be productive of eminent success. 'He who has not this solicitous care and Apostolic tenderness, knows not what it is to be a father and a Pastor.' But 'happy is that Pastor, to whom his life, his labours, his zeal, and the testimony of his conscience, give the just confidence to say, that he loves the flock of Christ; and that he loves it only for and in Christ, only by his charity, and in his spirit.'³ That he should have a shepherd's eye and a shepherd's heart, is equally

¹ 2 Cor. xiii. 9.

² 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. xi. 23—27.

³ Quesnel on Phil. ii. 19. 1 Cor. xvi. 24.

important for his acceptance with the flock, and with the chief Shepherd. The former will often bear and bear the most repulsive truths in such a spirit;¹ and if the Pastor is not in every one's mouth, he is at least in the hearts of the people of his charge. The latter expects to see in him the image of his own Divine tenderness and love—"feeding his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young."²

But if this love to our people is the spring of success, it is equally certain, that the principle of this love to souls is love to him that purchased them. Hence flow all our pains, patience, and care; from the delight of "spending and being spent" in the service of one, whom we supremely love. There are many tracks of life before us of far greater temporal indulgence. But the recollection of an infinite debt of love enlivens the endurance of the Ministerial cross with the readiness of love—"Love" then, 'is the great endowment of a shepherd of Christ's flock. He says not to Peter—"Art thou wise, or learned, or eloquent?" but "lovest thou me?" "Then feed my sheep"³—as if he would not trust them with one

¹ Dilige, et dic quicquid voles. August. in Gal. vi. 1. 'Scarce can the harshest reproofs be thrown back, that have upon them the stamp of love'—Leighton on 1 Pet. ii. 11. In illustration of this—a Minister of a remarkable spirit of love, sharply rebuked, in the presence of a clerical friend, a parishioner for gross misconduct. The severity of the reproof astonished his friend, who could not help declaring, that in his own case, with one of his people, he should have expected an irreconcilable breach. The answer was the result of Christian wisdom and experience—"O my friend, when there is love in the heart, you may say any thing."

² Isaiah xl. 11.

³ Leighton on 1 Peter v. 2. 'Christ might have said to Peter—If you love me, fast, lie on the naked ground, be in watchings, defend the oppressed, be the father of the orphan, and the husband

who did not love him. And surely the under-shepherds cannot forget the attractive and commanding influence of that thrice-repeated request,¹ enforced as it is by the power of his example, and by the constraining obligations of his love. Our whole charge must then be our “dearly beloved and longed for;” many of them doubtless will be our “joy and crown;” and the prospect of meeting them as such, “in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming,” is an auxiliary joy belonging to our anticipation of that glorious consummation.²

VI. *Do we pray for our flock?* It is of little use to be devoted to labour for our people, if we are not equally devoted to prayer on their behalf. A Ministry of power must be a Ministry of prayer. Thus Moses, Aaron, and Samuel,³ stood in the gap. Such was the power of Jeremiah’s intercession, as to restrain the execution of the Divine purposes.⁴ This was a chief mode with the Apostle of expressing his “longing after” his people, “in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” He seems as if he never bowed his knee before his God without expressing his interest on their behalf.⁵ Could such a spirit of intercession fail of “having power with God, and prevailing?” Without this prevalency with God we can never hope to prevail with men. ‘The Minister of the Gospel should indeed be as the angels of God, going betwixt him and his people; not only bringing down useful

of the widow. But, passing by all these—what does he say—Feed my sheep.’ Chrys. De Sacred. Lib. ii. Comp. Bowles’ Past. Ev. Lib. iii. 29. and Wits. de Vero Theologo, ut supra. It was a high commendation of the late Dr. Gillies from a Deist—‘that he believed, that he would be glad to carry all mankind in his bosom to the kingdom of heaven.’

¹ John xxi. 15—17.

² Phil. iv. 1. 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

³ Exod. xxxii. 11, 31. Numb. xvi. 46—48. 1 Sam. xii.

⁴ See Jer. vii. 16.

⁵ See Eph. i. 16. Phil. i. 4, 2 Tim. i. 3,

instructions from God to them, but putting up earnest supplications to God for them. And without this there can be little answer or success in the other; little springing up of this seed, though Ministers sow it plentifully in preaching, unless they secretly water it with their prayers and tears.”¹

Our *constant need of this duty* is most palpable. Our work on behalf of our people, and our responsibilities on their account, are great and awful. The consciousness of the danger which surround them—the multitude of eyes that are upon them—their helplessness, discouragements, and perplexities—all demand our remembrance before God. More affecting and stimulating excitements may be found in their too frequent insensibility to our glad tidings and determined opposition to their reception. And indeed here we may ask—Why do we so seldom mark any signal displays of Divine power—any extended awakening of souls—but because we have so little of that large spirit of intercession, which is at once the preparative and forerunner of enlarged success? Why is it, that our words often seem to die in our mouths, or drop and die between us and our people—that we seldom speak as if we hoped to prevail—that we are ready to despond under protracted unfruitfulness—but because our secret exercises on behalf of our people are so cold and infrequent? Do we not complain of a spirit of formality with our people? Time was, when we worked together upon new ground, when sin crouched under us, when our machine from

¹ Leighton on 1 Peter v. 10. Such prayers as Eph. i. 17—19. iii. 14—19. Phil. i. 9—11. Col. i. 9—12, &c. are well deserving of study, as models for enlarged and profitable Ministerial intercession. It was well observed by an old divine, that ‘the Minister, who is more before his people *in public*, than he is before God for them *in private*, has little reason to expect a blessing on his labours.’

the impulse of excitement seemed to move of itself. Perhaps now the attendance on our lectures has fallen short; our churches are not crowded as at the first. The restraints of our early Ministry have lost their power. Indifference has crept in. Even Christians have waxed cold. Our former plans have lost their interest. The edge of ardour is blunted. But has not the main-spring of the machine been weakened? Has not pleading intercession been neglected? If the emergency demands increase of faith, how much better is it to rejoice in the promised strength, than indolently to mourn over the increase of difficulty! Whatever variation of system may be attempted, (and some occasional variations will be necessary,) nothing will permanently maintain the real interest among us, when the excitement of novelty has subsided, but increased energy and faith in Ministerial prayer.¹

Our *sense of the importance* of this duty is intimately connected with a due impression of Ministerial responsibility.² It is the only means, by which our

¹ Dr. Doddridge felt this so strongly, that it was his custom to set apart days of public prayer, when the work of religion seemed to be at a stand in his congregation.—Orton's Life, ch. v. Most interesting memorials are preserved of the hours (golden hours doubtless for his people as well as for himself) which he used to spend in his vestry, in personal humiliation and Ministerial intercession, *ib.* ch. viii. sect. viii.

² Fleming mentions the earnestness of Mr. John Welch—often in the coldest winter nights rising for prayer, found weeping on the ground, and wrestling with the Lord on account of his people, and saying to his wife, when she pressed him for an explanation of his distress—'*I have the souls of 3000 to answer for, while I know not how it is with many of them.*'—Fulfilment of Scripture, p. 188. The following record of a late excellent parochial Minister is well worthy to be preserved—'*So deeply concerned was this good man for the salvation of his people, that he was often heard by his beloved partner, ere the morning light had scarcely appeared, recounting the names of those inscribed upon his Christian list, and offering up such ejaculatory petitions in their behalf, as their respective cases seemed to call for.*' Memoir of Rev. T. Lloyd. By Rev. R. Lloyd.

Ministrations can bring a blessing to our people, or by which we can maintain that affectionate self-denying devotion to their service, which is one of the master-springs of our work. Thus also by increasing supplication for them, we learn how to preach to them; we are supported under discouragement on their account; and the spark or flame of love is kept alive in the endurance of successive provocations and disappointments.¹ Individual cases, whether of temptations, perplexity, or obstinacy, should be carried with special earnestness and particularity “to the throne of grace.” ‘Without the ability to spread the cases of the people before God on all occasions,’—Cotton Mather tells his pastor and student—‘I should not judge you qualified for an ordination to the pastoral care of a flock among the churches of God, but worthy to have an ΑΝΑΞΙΟΣ cried out upon you.’²

The encouragement to this duty is full and explicit. It was when Daniel was presenting *supplication for his people*, as well as for himself—“*whiles he was speaking in prayer*” at the beginning of his supplication, “the commandment came forth.”³ And if the language of prayer was substituted for complaint—if instead of mourning—“There is none that calleth upon thy name”—we were to send up the cries—“Oh! that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest

¹ See the exquisite portrait of Ouranius in Law's *Serious Call*, ch. xxi. Comp. Davenant's description of Epaphras in Col. iv. 12. The Writer is happy to understand, that this valuable exposition will shortly become more fully the property of the Church, by a Translation with copious illustrative notes now passing through the press, By Rev. Josiah Allport.

² Student and Pastor, p. 202. His own ability in prayer was most remarkable. On his days of special intercession, he is stated to have individualized with more or less minuteness the case of each member of his church—amounting to upwards of four hundred persons. See his Life.

³ Dan. ix. 16—20.

come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence"—it could not be, that he should "*long* be angry against the prayer of his people."¹ Surely in the exercise of penitent returning to him, and faithful waiting upon him, "after two days will he revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

But *constancy* in this *work* is indispensable to the full receipt of its blessings. Well is it for us, if in the midst of our discouragements we can appeal to our flock—"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you"²—if our return from the house of God (concluding the service of the temple with "lifting up holy hands" to bless our people) is—not the interruption of the course of our work—but a transition only to another part of it—if the seed just sown is secretly followed and watered with prayer. But is this with us, as it was with the Apostle—*an unceasing employment*—"giving account with joy" or "with grief," as, in "watching for the souls"³ of our flock, we have marked the progress or decline of the work of God among them? *The subjects of our intercession* should have respect to the success of the work of God, in the awakening, enlightening, strengthening, and consoling influences of his Holy Spirit; to his presence in our congregations (upon which, and not upon the ability and fervour of our Ministrations, the efficacy of our Preaching supremely depends); to the supply of

¹ Isa. lxiv. 1, 7. with Psalm lxxx. 4.

² 1 Sam. xii. 23.

³ Comp. 1 Thess. iii. 9, 10. Rom. xi. 2, 3. with Heb. xiii. 17, —where the Apostle is primarily referring—not to the solemnity of the final account—but to a continual rendering of account to God in such a manner as is here intimated. See Owen, Doddridge, and Scott in loco.

unction, life, and comfort proportioned to the weaknesses, and wants, and circumstances of temptation of each of our people; and finally to the general effusion of his Holy Spirit upon the Church, to consummate the glory of the latter days, to “establish the mountain of the Lord’s house in the tops of the mountains,” that “all flesh may see the salvation of God,” and the voice of Zion may be heard, “lifted up with strength, saying unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.”¹ This spirit of Ministerial prayer is as necessary to form the character of a Pastor, as the spirit of personal prayer to form that of a Christian. Nor can there be hope of acceptance for Ministerial diligence in every department of our momentous labour, unless it be constantly cherished.² Let us therefore exhibit our character, as “watchmen set upon the walls,—who shall never hold their peace day nor night;” and let us not doubt, but he will, before long, return with an abundant increase of light, and power and love, “until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”³ The blessed influences of this spirit of intercession upon the public Ministration would be manifest to all men. Ministers, who habitually pray for their people, will not fail to find their people praying with them and for them, so that “for the gift bestowed upon them by the means of many persons, thanks will be given by many on their behalf.”⁴

¹ Isaiah ii. 2. xl. 5, 9.

² ‘That Ministration of the word, which is not accompanied with continual prayer for its success, is not like to have any great blessing go along with it. For a Minister to preach the word without constant prayer for its success, is a likely means to cherish and strengthen secret atheism in his own heart, and very unlikely to work holiness in the lives of others.’ Owen on Apostacy, p. 441—one of his most searching and important treatises.

³ Isaiah lxii. 6, 7.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 11.

Let us, then, adopt as our own, the words of that most eminent servant of God, Moses, when praying for the display of the Divine power and glory to his people Israel :—“**MAKE US GLAD ACCORDING TO THE DAYS WHEREIN THOU HAST AFFLICTED US, AND THE YEARS WHEREIN WE HAVE SEEN EVIL. LET THY WORK APPEAR UNTO THY SERVANTS, AND THY GLORY UNTO THEIR CHILDREN. LET THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD OUR GOD BE UPON US ; AND ESTABLISH THOU THE WORK OF OUR HANDS UPON US ; YEA, THE WORK OF OUR HANDS ESTABLISH THOU IT.**”¹

¹ Psalm xc. 15—17.

THE END.



INDEX.

A

ADAM'S (Melchior) Life of Luther, 185 n. 416 n.
 — (Rev. T.) Private Thoughts, 600 n. 642 n. 646 n.
 Addison referred to, 271, 272
 Adult Schools. See Schools.
 Advantages of Personal Religion in the Ministry, 29, 30
 —————to the Ministry, 202—209
 —————of Prayer to the Ministry, 655—661
 Alleine referred to, 58, 219, 365 n. 462, 598
 Allport's (Rev. J.) Translation of Bishop Davenant, 658 n.
 Ambrose quoted, 313 n. 636, 650 n.
 American Churches, custom of, 582 n.
 Amphion referred to, 450 n.
 Amusements, Clerical, 173—178
 Andrews, Bishop referred to, 633 n.
 Antinomianism, 299—303.
 Apostles, Ministry of, 34, 350, 358, 374, 375 n. 415, 447, 459. See St. Paul
 Applicatory Preaching, 360—370
 Article xiii. 357 n.
 ————— xvii. 331
 Articles, Burnet on, 54
 Assurance the spring of exertion, 238, 239
 Athanasius, preaching of, referred to, 419 n.
 Attainments, spiritual, 37—39
 Augustine referred to, 43 n. 58, 104 n. 199, 200 n. 268 n. 275, 341 n. 357 n. 382, 388, 389 n. 442 n. 508 n. 596, 613 n.
 ————— Comment. 308, 418 n. 551 n. 654 n.
 ————— de Civitate Dei, 409 n. 435 n.
 ————— Doctr. Christiana, 263 n. 365 n. 267, 278, 279, 280, 415 n. 420 n. 450 n.
 ————— Epistles, 268 n. 313 n.
 ————— Office, 249
 ————— Sermons, 415, 418 n. 447.

B

Backslider treated, 498, 499
 Bacon, Lord, quoted, 64 n. 488 n.
 Baptism, 578—582.
 ————— Catechism and Dialogue on, 581 n.
 ————— Infant, encouragement to, 580.
 ————— Office for, 578, 579 n.
 Barrington's (Bp.) Charges, 327 n. 508 n.
 Barrow's Sermons, 364 n.
 Baxter, referred to, 55, 56, 58, 223 n. 462, 504
 ————— Christian Directory, 55, 506 n.
 ————— Church History, 394.
 ————— Compassionate Counsel for Young Men, 518.
 ————— Cure for Church Divisions, 594.
 ————— Infant's Church Membership, 555 n.
 ————— Life of Alleine, 462 n. 637 n.
 ————— Practical Works, 481 n.
 ————— Reasons for Christian Religion, 55
 ————— Reformed Pastor, 36, 56, 202—205, 238 n. 245, 255 n. 287, 421 n. 426, 431, 432, 437, 439, 440, 455 n. 461, 593, 598 n. 637
 ————— Wilson's, Rev. D. Prefatory Essay to. See Wilson
 ————— Saints' Rest, 55, 56
 Beattie, Dr. referred to, 528, n.
 Bennet's Direction for Study, 146 n.
 Benson's, Dr. Life of Christ quoted, 362
 Bernard quoted, 84, 125, 341 n. 439 n.
 ————— R. Faithful Shepherd 253 n.
 Berne, Synod of, referred to, 390
 Beveridge, Bp. quoted, 143, 144
 Beza quoted, 309, 317 n. 460 n. 615 n.
 Bible Associations, 620
 ————— Exercises, 530 n.
 ————— Teacher's Manual, 530 n.
 ————— Quest. Book, 530 n.
 Bickersteth's, Rev. E. Christian Hearer, 65, 69

- Bickersteth's, Rev. E. Christian Student**, 66 n. 87 n. 114 n. 533 n. 618 n.
 ———— **Rev. J. Catechisms**, 561 n. 576 n. 581 n.
Bingham referred to, 246
Blackmore's, Sir R. Accomplished Preacher, 264 n. 429 n.
Blackwell's Meth. Evang. 206, 207, 259 n. 498 n.
Blair, Dr. 364, 430, 431 n.
Blomfield, Bp. quoted, 520, 649n 650n.
Blunt, Rev. J. J. Veracity of the Gospels and Acts demonstrated, 50 n.
Boldness in preaching, 398—400
Bolland, Mrs. referred to, 224 n.
Bolton referred to, 56, 206 n. 309, 506 n.
Books, judicious choice of, 62—64
Boston referred to, 29 n.
Bowles' Pastor Evangelicus, 9 n. 27 n. 56, 247 n. 263 n. 343 n. 420 n. 446 n. 460 n. 491 n. 648 n. 655 n.
Boyle quoted, 59, 60
Bradford referred to, 52, 191, 306 n.
Brainerd's Life, 57, 142 n. 189, 203 n. 237 n. 279, 322, 372, 373
Brewster on the Ordination Service, 179 n.
Bridges, Rev. Dr. referred to, 90 n.
Bristol Adult Spelling Book recommended, 617 n.
Brown's Rev. J. Life and Remains, 18 n. 143, 317, 347 n. 446, 518, 632, 645 n. 647 n.
Bruce, Rev. R. referred to, 286.
Bucani Method. Concionand. 263, 264 n. 266 n.
Buchanan's, Rev. Dr. Sermons quoted, 46, 47, 57, 394 n.
Budd's Rev. H. Infant Baptism, 114 n. 356, 389 n. 393, 417, 579 n.
 ———— **Church Missionary Sermon** quoted, 634, n.
Bull, Bp. 208 n. 272 n. 389 n. 591 n.
Bunyan quoted, 639, n.
Burder's, Rev. H. F. Mental Discipline, quoted, 261 n.
Burgess, Bp. referred to 588 n. 647
 ———— **A.** quoted, 205 n.
Burkitt quoted, 138 n.
Burnet, Bp. on the Articles, 52
 ———— **History of his own times**, 64, 121, 122, 242 n. 464 n.
 ———— **History of the Reformation**, 52, 388
 ———— **Life**, 385
 ———— **Pastoral Care**, 9 n. 29 n. 56, 60, 119, 120, 128 n. 139, 140 n. 146 n. 155 n. 191 n. 240—242, 272 n. 365, 385, 389 n. 391 n. 417, 423 n. 444, 461 n. 462, 508n. 517, 564 n. 578, 579, 588 n. 592 n. 605, 632 n. 648 n.
Butler's Bp. Analogy, 40, 214
 ———— **Charges**, 561 n.
- C**
- Cadogan, Mr.** referred to, 181
 ———— **Life of**, 113 n. 594 n.
Call to Ministry. See **Ministry.**
Calvin, 52, 53, 58, 462
 ———— **Comment.** 8 n. 20, 53, 74, 98 n. 180 n. 203 n. 230 n. 299 n. 308, 309, 312, 446 n. 460 n. 490 n. 492 n. 554 n.
 ———— **Instit.** 4 n, 15 n, 53, 126 n. 554, 568
Campbell's Lectures on Past. Char. 146 n. 175 n. 391 n. 450 n.
 ———— **Philosophy of Rhetoric**, 407
 ———— **Pulpit Eloquence**, 48, 49, 391 n. 419 n.
 ———— **Systematic Theology**, 63, 74, 75, 333, 421 n.
Canops of the Church, 508, 563, 564
Careless, treatment of, 481—483
Carey, Dr. referred to, 229
Caryl on Job, quoted, 278
Cases, treatment of, 478—507
 ———— **sick**, 510—512
Casuistical Divinity, recommended, 506
Catechism, Church, referred to, 427, 523, 557, 578, 579
Cave's Primitive Christianity, 383, 388
Cecil, Life of, 254 n. 260, 261, 273, 274. 361 n.
 ———— **Remains**, 54, 55, 65, 67 n. 101, 102 n. 104 n. 138, 139, 152 n. 153 n. 154 n. 160, 220 n. 223 n. 238 n. 260, 263, 273, 274, 283 n. 293, 319, 326, 384, 390, 410, 513 n.
Chalmers, Rev. Dr. referred to, 11 n. 324 n.
 ———— **Civic Economy** 604 n.
 ———— **Sermons**, 100 n. 370 n. 439 n. 592 n.
Charity, distribution of, 472, 473
Charles, Rev. T. Life of, 22, 23, 521 n.
Charles V. referred to, 426
Charnock quoted, 103, 104
 ———— referred to, 49, 56
Choice of Texts and Subjects, 238—260.
Christ, Ministry of, 34, 107, 108, 141, 167, 168, 362, 400, 401, 408, 409, 414, 415, 419, 433, 438, 439, 459, 381, 483, 494, 486, 494.
 ———— **Ministerial Character of.** See **Bishop Sumner**
Christian, confirmed and consistent, treatment of, 402—505
 ———— **unestablished**, 506, 501
 ———— **Young**, 492—497
 ———— **Biography** recommended, 471
 ———— **Guardian**, referred to, 632 n.
 ———— **Observer**, Pref. ix. x. 45 n.

- 65 n. 135 n. 393—395, 553 n.
554 n.
Christian Remembrancer, 344 n.
Church Communion, 585, 586, 589
—— History recommended, 50
Chrysostom referred to, 56, 58, 388,
636 n.
—— Comment. 268 n. 554 n.
—— Homilies, 382, 416,
447
—— Sacerd. 9 n. 56 n. 535n.
655 n.
Cicero quoted, 25 n. 181 n. 202, 387,
430 n.
Circulating classes, 543
Clarke, Dr. on the Attributes referred
to, 49
—— Rev. G. Bible Exercises, re-
commended, 530 n.
—— Teacher's Questioning
Book, 530 n.
Clark's Lives quoted, 58 n. 472, 473 n,
598 n.
—— Marrow of Ecclesiastical His-
tory, 205 n. 219 n.
Claude's Essay, 264 n. 266, 363 n.
368 n.
—— Robinson's notes on, 416 n.
446 n.
Clergyman's Instructor, 75 n. 212 n.
389 n. 461 n. 467 n. 514 n. 517 n.
591 n.
Clerical Communion, 586—588.
—— Meetings, 587, 588
Clothing Societies, 473 n.
Col. i. 29. illustrated, 644 n.
Colquhoun on Law and Gospel,
quoted, 305, 306
Comber referred to, 52, 126 n.
216 n. 491 n. 554 n. 632 n.
Comforts of the Ministry, 25—32
Commentaries, use of, 74—76, 266,
261
Composition of Sermons, 258—274,
400, 401
Confidence, Pastoral, 467—469, 552
Confirmation of Faith from the Mi-
nistry, 30
—— Ordinance of, 553—
576
Confirmed Christian. See Christian.
Conformity to the World, 144—157
Connected View of Doctrine, im-
portance of, 337—339
Connexion of the Law with the
Gospel, 303—316
Consistent Christian. See Christian.
Convictions, natural and spiritual,
488—491.
Conyers, Rev. Dr. referred to, 322,
323
Co-partnership in the Ministry, 113
Copying Sermons, 271—273
2 Cor. vi. 1, illustrated, 8.
—— xi. 23, do. 615 n.
Cottage Readings, 619, 620
Cotton's, Rev. J. Life, 59, 444 n.
Country Ministry, 112
Covetousness, spirit of, 178—187
Cowper quoted, 157, 324 n.
Cradock's Knowledge and Practice
referred to, 514 n.
Cranmer's Works referred to, 52
Crantz's History of Greenland, 321
Cure of souls, employment in, 85—
90
Cyprian referred to, 81 n. 138, 191 n.
447, 460, 461 n.
- D
- Dangers of Study, 66
—— to Personal Religion in the
Ministry, 211—215
Davenant, Bp. quoted, 10 n. 17 n.
294 n. 311, 335 n. 343 n. 360, 614,
658 n.
Davison's Rev. J. Lectures on Pro-
phesy referred to, 72
Dealtry, Rev. Dr. Gospel Message
referred to, 309 n. 426 n.
Decided Preaching of the Gospel,
376—378
Denunciations of the Gospel to be
delivered in love, 448—450
Desire of Ministry, 122—127
—— Ministerial Success, 637—
640
Devotedness to the Ministry, 136—
144, 641—646
Difficulties of the Ministry. See
Ministry.
Dignity of the Ministry. See Minis-
try.
Diligence in preaching, 433—437
Discriminating preaching, 370—375
Dissent, evil of, 114
—— plausible ground of, 424,
596
Dissenters, conduct towards, 502,
593
District system, 116, 607—612
Divine Influence, need of, 100—105
Doctrinal preaching, 327—344, 402—
410
Dod, Mr. referred to, 274 n.
Doddrige on Evidences, 49
—— Expositor, 8, 141 n. 173 n.
615, 616 n. 659 n.
—— Lectures on Preaching,
89 n. 367, 396
—— Life, 57, 75 n. 206 n. 279,
414 n. 428 n. 452, 454 n. 462, 463 n.
468 n. 518, 639 n. 645 n. 647 n.
657 n.
—— Sermon, 172, 173
Dodwell, Mr. referred to, 73 n.
Donne, Dr. Walton's Life of, 636 n.
Douglas, J. Advancement of Society
quoted, 248, 249
Du Pin referred to, 80 n.

- Dwight, Dr.** referred to, 55 n.
 ——— Sermons, 324, 423 n. 636 n.
 ——— Theology, 50, 52, 422, 423
- E**
- Ecclesiastical Law**, 145 n.
Eclectic Review quoted, 240 n.
Edwards' Dr. J. Preacher referred to, 393 n. 424 n.
 ——— President, on Affections, 373 n.
 ——— Marks of a true spirit, 47, 48
 ——— Life, 67 n. 70 n.
 ——— Thoughts on Revival, 197
Elder children, instruction of, 535—537
Election, doctrine of, 330—334, 403
Eliot's, Missionary, Life, 17, 18, 165, 190, 256, n. 318, 467, 521 n. 587, 588
Employment in the Cure of souls, 85—90
Encouragement, under the want of an inward call to the Ministry, 131, 132
 ——— of the Ministry, 25—32
 ——— of the Ministry of the Young, 519
End and Essence of Sabbath School Teaching recommended, 524 n.
Enmity of the heart, 106—108
Epaphroditus referred to, 35, 194, 658 n.
Epistles, Study of, recommended, 72, 334, 335, 350, 404, 411, 412, 415, 447
Erasmus referred to, 46, 399
 ——— Ecclesiastes quoted, 16 n. 17 n. 18 n. 32 n. 35 n. 36 n. 240, 280 n. 389 n.
Escreet's Rev. J. Memoirs, 450 n. 562 n.
Evidences, study of recommended, 49, 50, 481
Expectation of Ministerial success, 230, 637—640
Experimental Preaching, 345—351
Expositions of the Church Service recommended, 590, 591
Expository Preaching, 381, 382
Extempore Preaching, 383—389
- F**
- Faber's Horæ Mosaicæ** referred to, 72
 ——— Sacred Calendar of Prophecy, 72
Faith, encouragement to, 231—233
 ——— ground of, 230
 ——— Ministry, work of, 84, 233—237
 ——— want of, 229
- Faithfulness in the Visitation of the Sick**, importance of, 512—514
False professor, treatment of, 486—488
Family Order, Minister's, 218—221.
 ——— religion, 217, 219
 ——— worship, 226—228, 386
Fathers of the English Church, 52 n. 306 n. 308, 333
Fear of man, 158—163
Fenelon's Dialogues, 207, 208, 253 n. 389 n. 391 n. 418, 419 n.
 ——— Letter to the Academy, 439 n. 447
Fervency in preaching, 425—432
Fisk, Pliny, Life of, 63, 462 n.
Flavel referred to, 50, 200 n.
Fleming's Fulfilment of Scripture, 286 n. 657 n.
Fletcher's Life (Cox), 180 n. 451
 ——— (Gilpin), 196, 197, 286, 287 n.
 ——— Portrait of St. Paul, 221, 390 n.
Fordyce quoted, 264
Frank's, Professor, Christ the sum and substance of Scripture, 173
 ——— Guide to Scripture, 62 n. 73
Friendly Societies, 550, 551
Friends, Society of, referred to, 175, 176 n.
Fuller's Rev. A. Backslider, 498 n.
 ——— J. G. Child's Examiner, 530 n.
 ——— Dr. T. History of the Church, 248 n. 427 n. 588 n.
Fulness of Scripture, 267
- G**
- Gal. iii. 27, referred to**, 578, 579 n.
Garrick referred to, 429 n.
Gen. iii. exercise on, 524, 525
Gerard's Pastoral care, 414, 516 n. 647
Gibbon's, Rev. Dr. Christian Minister, 492 n.
Gibson, Bp. referred to, 467
Gifts, spiritual, 39—42, 604
Gillies, Rev. Dr. referred to, 655 n.
 ——— Hist. Coll. 464 n.
Gisborne's Natural Theology, 50
Glasgow Association of Young Men, 549
Glenrock Sunday School, 530, n.
Godeau, Bp. Pastoral Instructions, 173 n. 440 n.
Gospel, Scriptural Preaching of, 316—378, 592
Gouge, Rev. T. referred to, 472, 473 n.
Granger's Biograph. Hist. 436 n.
Graves's, Dean, Lectures on the Pentateuch, 71, 72
Greenham, 310, 506 n.
Gregory Nazianzen, 9 n. 249, 636

- Gregory Nazianzen de Cura Past. 186 n. 198 n. 389 n. 460, 461, 478 n.
 Grimshaw, Rev. W. Life of, 168, 182 n. 312, 313, 345, 436
 Grindal, Abp. referred to, 247, 248 n. 588
 Grotius referred to, 443, 460 n.
 Gurnal referred to, 214 n. 287, 310, 506 n.
- H
- Habits of General Study, 44—67
 ——— Meditation, 275—279
 Hale. Sir M. quoted, 170, 171 n.
 Hall's Bp. Life, quoted, 394 n.
 ——— Works, 372, 423, 554 n.
 ——— R. Reviews, 270, 271 n.
 ——— Sermon, 10, 31 n. 265 n. 354 n. 364, 374, 407 n. 443, 468 n.
 ——— T. Sal Terræ, 9 n. 102 n. 117 n.
 Halyburton's Memoirs, 464 n. 465 n. 488 n.
 Hammond's Dr. Comments, 460 n.
 ——— Life of, 274
 ——— Pastor's Motto, 644 n. 652 n.
 ——— View of the Directory, 554 n.
 Hanmer on Confirmation, 554 n.
 Harmony of Confessions recommended, 53 n.
 Hebrews, Epistle to, 368, 369, 505.
 ——— xiii. 17, 56, 476 n. 637 n. 659 n.
 Help to the Gospels, recommended, 530 n.
 Helpers, office and uses of, 87, 126, 603—615
 Henry, P. Life of, 11 n. 48 n. 57, 68 n. 73 n. 126 n. 216 n. 219, 226, 228, 256 n. 275 n. 287, 362 n. 414, 463 n. 506 n. 570 n. 580, 582, 598 n.
 ——— M. Life of, 68 n. 125 n. 126 n. 256 n. 320 n. 422 n. 463 n. 598 n. 639 n.
 ——— Commentary, 74
 ——— Communicant's Companion recommended, 585 n.
 ——— Treatise on Baptism referred to, 579, 580 n.
 ——— Works, 639 n.
 Herbert's Country Parson, Pref. ix. x. xi. 56, 69 n. 82, 186, 187, 217, 251, 255 n. 272, 364 n. 428, 429, 469 n. 473 n.
 ——— Life, 204, 591 n. 631
 Heresies, rise of, 113, 465, 466
 Herman's, Abp. of Cologne, Consultation, 318, 588 n.
 Herodotus quoted, 208 n.
 Hervey, Rev. J. quoted, 148, 320 n.
 Hildersham, 361 n. 506 n.
 Hinton, Rev. J. Biographical Sketch of, 441
- Hinton, Rev. J. H. on Ministerial Qualification, 41, 42
 Hints for Sunday Schools, recommended, 529 n.
 Homilies, 52, 251, 272 n. 416
 Honouring the Ministry, 628, 629
 Hooker, 12 n. 15 n. 51, 118 n. 245, 246, 250 n. 466, 524 n.
 Hooper, Bp. Confession, 434, 435 n.
 ——— Fox's Life of, 218, 219, 435 219, 434, 435 n.
 Hopeful Impressions of the Young, 544—548
 Horace quoted, 360 n. 381 n. 390 n.
 Horne's Bp. Charge, 326, 327
 ——— Considerations on John the Baptist, 209
 ——— Essays, 171 n. 353
 ——— Preaching the Gospel, 354, 356, 357
 ——— Rev. T. H. Introduction to Scripture, 73
 Horsley's, Bp. Charges, 323, 335, 336, 353, 508 n.
 Howe's Works, 56. 104 n.
 Hurd's, Bp. Charges, 419 n.
- I
- Ignatius referred to, 560
 Ignorant. treatment of. 481—483
 Improvidence. Ministerial. 187. 188 n.
 Inefficiency, Ministerial, symptoms of, 99, 100
 Infant Baptism. 579
 ——— Schools. See Schools.
 Infidels, treatment of, 478—481
 Institution of the Ministry. See Ministry.
 Instruction of the Elder Children, 535—537
 ——— the Poor, 87
 ——— Servants, 460 n.
 Islington Parochial School, 543
- J
- James', King, Works, 420. 424 n.
 James's Rev. J. A. Sunday School. Teacher's Guide, 529 n.
 Jebbs Bp. Charges, 145 n. 647 n.
 ——— Sacred Literature, 415 n.
 Jeremiah referred to, 230, 399 n. 655
 Jerningham's Essay quoted, 430
 Jerome quoted, 24 n. 58, 145 n. 146 n. 206, 207 n. 254 n. 313 n. 386, 421. 430 n. 442 n. 640
 Jewell's Bp. Apology, 51, 52
 ——— Life, 254 n. 435 n.
 John the Baptist referred to, 164
 John vi. exposition of, 514
 Johnson Dr. Boswell's Life of, 167 n. 424 n.
 Judson's Scripture Questions, 530 n.
 Julian, Emperor, referred to, 216. 217 n.

- K**
- Kenn, Bp. quoted, 630 n.
 Kingdon, Rev. T. H. on Confirmation, 554 n.
 Kingsbury, Rev. W. Memoirs of, 647 n.
- L**
- Lactantius quoted, 206 n. 208 n. 210, 448 n.
 Latimer, Bp. 142, 143 n. 328, 329 n. 399, 434
 Laud's, Abp. Manual of Prayers, 514 n.
 Lavater referred to, 361 n.
 Law, connection of, with Gospel, 303—316
 ———— Preaching of, 294—316
 ———— Uses of, 296—309
 ————'s, Bp. Charges, 520 n.
 ———— Rev. W. Serious Call, 658 n.
 Lay Influence, 115
 Leeds' Sunday School Hymn Book, 527 n.
 Leigh's Critica Sacra, 122 n. 123 n.
 Leighton, Abp. 4 n. 29 n. 47 n. 164, 203, 420 n. 438, 461 n. 504, 554 n. 611 n. 622, 628, 687 n. 654, 656
 ———— Life of, 47 n. 57, 420 n. 461 n. 637 n.
 Leland, Dr. referred to, 130
 ———— on Divine Revelation, 49
 Leyden, Professors of, judgment on Confirmation 555 n.
 Library, Parochial, 617, 618
 ———— Sunday School, 533 n.
 Liturgy, Exposition of, 590, 591
 ———— reading of, 282, 283 n. 591
 Lloyd, Memoirs of Rev. Thomas, 57, 657 n.
 ———— Sunday Teacher's Manual, 529 n.
 Local Hinderances to the Ministry, 112—116
 Locke's Conduct of the Understanding, 61, 63 n.
 ———— Letter on Toleration, 202
 Loskiel's Missions quoted, 321, 322 n.
 Love in Preaching the Gospel, 445—452
 ———— to our people, 648—655
 ———— work 646—648
 Luther referred to, 19 n. 81, 117 n. 191, 193, 315, 316, 393, 398, 399, 582 n.
 ———— Diatribe, 53
 ———— on Galatians, 53, 119 n. 308, 315, 316
 ———— Table Talk, 160 n. 295, 416, 419 n.
 Lyon's, Rev. R. Visitation Sermon, 355 n.
- M**
- Macgill's, Rev. Dr. Consideration a young Clergyman, 442 n.
 Macknight, Dr. 8 n. 188, 189, 33
 Maclaurin's Essays, 487
 Maintaining the Interest of Ministry, 656, 657
 Mant's, Bp. Prayer-book, 144 n. 216 n.
 Manton, Dr. referred to, 2, 262 n.
 Marbury's Exposition of Habakkuk, 507, 508
 Martial quoted, 255 n.
 Martyn's, Rev. H. Life, 66 n. 195 n. 172, 196, 200, 212, 396, 631, 647 n.
 ———— Sermons, 262 n.
 Mason's Student and Pastor, 513
 Massillon quoted, 64, 65, 127, 153 n. 155, 169, 174, 181, 192, 214 n. 287 n. 443 n. 587
 ———— referred to, 360, 261,
 Mather's, Cotton, Essays, 462, 551 n. 598 n.
 ———— Life, 57, 165 n. 198, 199, 259, 260, 262, 270, 281, 282, 615, 658 n.
 ———— New England, 17, 18, 60, 225 n. 228 n. 289, 290, 444
 ———— Student and Pastor, vii. 9 n. 27 n. 60 n. 282 n. 318, 343, 527, 658
 Matthew, Abp. referred to, 435
 Melancthon referred to, 59, 318 n.
 ———— Common Places, 394 n.
 Memoriter Sermons, 391 n.
 Miller's, Professor, Letters, 60 n. 180 n. 463 n.
 Milner's Church History, 50, 83, 416 n.
 ———— Scott's continuation of, 70 n. 166 n. 186 n. 304 n. 416 n.
 ———— Life, 322, 392
 ———— Sermon's, 393
 Milton quoted, 390 n.
 Minister's Family, 216—221
 ———— Wife, 221—226, 629
 ———— Worship, 226—228, :
 Ministerial Biography recommended, 57, 642 n.
 ———— Register recommended, 468 n. 570
 Ministration of the Spirit, coming arising from, 26
 Ministry of the Apostles.
 ———— Apostles.
 ———— of Christ. See Christ.
 ———— Christian, call to, 116—
 ———— character of, 37, 84, 192, 233—237

- Ministry, Christian, Comforts of, 25**
 —32
 ————— Desire of, 122—
 127
 ————— Difficulties of, 16
 25, 507—517, 544—553, 563—567
 ————— Dignity of, 8—11
 ————— Institution of, 3—7
 ————— Necessity of, 12—15
 ————— Origin of, 3—7
 ————— Pastoral, 349, 455—623
 ————— Preparation for, 43—90,
 251—293
 ————— Public, 245—452
 ————— Qualifications for, 32—42,
 127, 128
 ————— Recollections of, 627—661
 ————— Responsibility of, 591, 631
 —636
 ————— Trials of, 16—25, 475, 476,
 615
 ————— Uses of, 12—15
 ————— to the Young, 518—576
 Miracles illustrative of the Doctrines
 of the Gospel, 528 n.
 Missionary Associations, 620
 Mitchel, Mr. referred to, 289, 290
 Mode of Scriptural Preaching, 379—
 397
 Moravian Missions, 321
 More's, Stephen, Wise Preacher,
 364, 365 n.
 Morning Exercises recommended,
 506 n.
 Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History,
 15 n. 50
 Mudge's Clergyman's Advice, 616 n.
 Musculus referred to, 267
- N
- Necessity of the Ministry. See
 Ministry
 Neglect of Retirement, 188—197
 Newton, Bp. on Prophecy, 72
 ————— Rev. J. Letters, 393 n.
 ————— Works, 32, 33, 303,
 323 n.
 Nicholl's, Dr. referred to, 216 n.
 Norton, Mr. Life of, 59 n.
- O
- Oberlin's Memoirs, 168 n. 478, 621 n.
 Ocolampadius, Epistle of, 166 n.
 Olney Hymns, 26 n.
 Oratorios, attendance on, 175, 176
 Ordination Services, 80, 81, 139, 164,
 179, 180, 216 n. 332, 461, 592, 632
 Origin referred to, 204, 205 n. 210,
 213 n.
 Origin of the Ministry. See Ministry
 Original Languages, study of, 69,
 70 n.
 Orpheus referred to, 450 n.
 Orton's Letters, 468 n. 513 n.
- Orton's Life of Doddridge. See Dod-
 dridge
 Osterwald quoted, 42 n. 461, 468 n.
 508
 Ottee, Mr. referred to, 638 n.
 Owen, Dr. referred to, 17, 18, 54, 55,
 58, 288, 506 n. 518, 519 n.
 ————— Pneumatologia, 38, 39,
 54, 83
 ————— Sermons, 214 n. 275 n.
 ————— on Apostacy, 54, 660 n.
 ————— Hebrews, 54, 409, 410,
 659 n.
 ————— Justification, 310, 311
 ————— Mortification, 54, 165 n.
 ————— Psalm cxxx. 54
- P
- Paley's, Dr. Charges, 190
 ————— Evidences, 49
 ————— Natural Theology, 50
 ————— Horæ Paulinæ, 50, 445
 ————— Sermons, 214 n.
 Pare referred to, 313 n.
 Parlour Preaching, 469—471
 Parochial Duties illustrated, 222,
 619 n.
 Pastor, Christian, Portrait of, 477,
 478
 Pastoral Confidence. See Confidence
 ————— Ministry. See Ministry
 ————— Theology, 56, 57
 ————— Work, 455—478
 Patrick's, Bp. Commentary referred
 to, 74
 Patrick's Places, 306 n. 315
 Paul's, St. Ministry, 34, 36, 39, 40,
 142, 145, 357, 358, 377, 378, 399,
 412, 451, 459, 460, 609, 651—653
 Pavillon, Bp. of Alet, 426
 Payson's, Rev. Dr. Life recommended
 60, 642 n.
 Pearson's, Rev. J. N. Life of Abp.
 Leighton. See Leighton
 Pentateuch, study of, 71, 72
 Pericles referred to, 280, 281 n.
 Perkins quoted, 293 n. 309, 506 n.
 Perpetual application, method of,
 367—370
 Personal religion, danger to, from
 the Ministry, 211—215
 ————— importance of, 36
 —37, 202—210
 Philip, Rev. R. on Christian Ex-
 perience, 506 n.
 Pike and Hayward's Cases of Con-
 science, 506 n.
 Plainness in Preaching, 414—426
 Politics, caution against, 155 n.
 Polycarp referred to, 239
 Poole's Synopsis, 74, 76, 152 n.
 Poor, instruction of, 87
 Porteus's, Bp. Charges, 327 n. 520 n.
 599, 632 n.
 Power of Satan. See Satan

- Practical Preaching**, 224, 325, 351—359
- Prayer, special**, 81—85, 279—289
— for our people, 655
- 666
- Preaching, Ordinance of**, 245—251
— Preparation for, 251—293
- Preaching of the Gospel. See Gospel**
- Law. *See* Law
- Mode of, 379—397
— Spirit of, 397—452
- Preston, Dr.** referred to, 195, 444 n.
- Pride, spiritual**, 197—201
- Primitive Ministry**, 388
- Pupulizing System**, 184
- Prophecy, study of**, 72, 404, 405 n.
- Prynne's Invective against Prelates**, 436 n.
- Puritan Divines, study of, recommended**, 53—56, 506 n.
- Q**
- Qualifications for the Ministry. See Ministry**
- Quesnel** quoted, 24 n. 28 n. 82 n. 118 n. 119, 120, 121 n. 125, 126, 137, 146 n. 153 n. 157, 160 n. 161 n. 187, 199 n. 198 n. 199 n. 216, 232 n. 277, 408 n. 418 n. 466 n. 476 n. 504, 634, 653
- Quintilian**, 419 n. 430 n. 450 n.
- R**
- Recollections of the Ministry. See Ministry**
- Recreations of the Minister. See Amusements**
- Reformers, writings of**, 52, 53
- Reformed Churches, judgment on Confirmation**, 554, 555
- Religious Tract Society**, 52 n. 165 n. 286 n.
- Repetition of Sermons recommended** 434
- Reproof, Ministerial**, 448, 611 n.
- Residence, importance of**, 143 n. 466
- Retirement, importance of**, 188—195
- Reynold's, Bp.** quoted, 208 n. 259 n. 316, 336, 337, 343, 344
- Richmond's, Rev. L.** *Life*, 121, 140 n. 175 n. 217, 221 n. 332, 350, 384, 421 n. 442, 550 n. 602 n.
- Fathers of the English Church. *See* Fathers
- Ridley, Bp.** quoted, 333
- Riland's, Rev. J.** *Antichrist*, 157 n. 203 n.
- Robinson's Rev. T.** *Christian System*, 52, 55
— *Life*, 113 n. 250, 268 n. 359 n. 367, 368, 384, 385, 392, 396, 563 n. 583, 584 n.
— *Scripture Characters*, 368 n.
- Robinson's, Rev. T.** *Visitation Sermon*, 599, 640
— *Rev. R. Notes on Claude. See Claude*
- Rogers of Dedham**, quoted, 310, 467 n.
- Rollin** referred to, 419 n.
- Romaine, Rev. W.** referred to, 318, 503, 504
- Romans viii.** 330, 331 n. 350
— ix. 415, 578 n.
- Rutherford's Letters** quoted, 606, 651 n.
— *Life*, 637 n. 642 n.
- S**
- Sacrament, Invitation of the Young to**, 575, 576
- Sacramental Instruction**, 576—585
— Meetings, 584, 585, 591, 592 n.
- Satan, power of**, 109—112
- Sanderson, Bp.** quoted, 41 n. 194 n. 279, 280 n.
- Saurin** referred to, 270
- Schism, nature of**, 589, 590
— preservations from, 465, 466, 590—592
- Schools, Adult**, 616, 617
— *Infant*, 537—541
— *Sunday*, 520—537
— *Weekly*, 541—544
- Slater on Thessalonians**, 112 n.
- Scott's, Rev. T.** *Commentary*, 45 n. 72, 74, 76, 131 n. 182 n. 226, 659
— Force of Truth, 131 n. 313 n.
— Letters, 138 n. 147 n. 170, 173, 174, 196, 371 n.
— *Life*, 32, 45 n. 57, 65, 70, 71, 77 n. 82, 90, 138 n. 147, 155 n. 159, 169 n. 184, 185, 226, 229 n. 285, 576 n. 596 n. 640 n.
— *Pilgrim's Progress*, notes on, 146, 147, 333 n. 597 n.
— Sermons, 208
— Works, 147 n. 186
- Scott's, Rev. J.** *Continuation of Milner. See Milner*
- Scougal's Works**, 345
— Sermon on the Ministry, 16 n. 634 n. 636 n.
- Scriptural Preaching of the Gospel. See Gospel**
- Law. *See* Law
- Scriptures, Study of. See Study**
- Secker's, Abp.** *Charges* quoted, 60, 70, 146 n. 149 n. 151, 164 n. 174, 175, 182 n. 195, 216, 217 n. 326, 327, 360, 389, 391 n. 396, 417, 427, 460 n. 461 n. 467, 468 n. 553 n. 563 n. 564, 590, 591
— Sermons, 175 n.
- Self-denial, importance of**, 163—178

- Selfishness, 200, 201**
Self-righteous, treatment of, 483—485
Seneca quoted, 59, 62 n. 180
Servants, instruction of, 460
Shaftesbury, Lord, referred to, 642
Shepard, Rev. T. Life of, 23, 60 n. 206 n. 274, 275 n. 283 n.
Shuttleworth's, Rev. W. Minister's Pocket Companion recommended, 627 n.
Sick, Visitation of, 87, 507—517
 — Service for, 508 n.
Simeon's, Rev. C. Works, 261, 262, 264 n. 294 n. 368 n. 401 n. 408
Singleness in Preaching, 437—444
Smith's Lectures on the Sacred Office, 391 n. 442, 508 n.
 — J. referred to, 638 n.
Social Meetings, 596—603
 — Visits, 469—471
South, Dr. quoted, 47 n.
Spanheim's Ecclesiastical Annals referred to, 51 n.
 — Wright's, Rev. G. Translation of, 51 n.
Spectator referred to, 271, 272
Spencer, Rev. T. referred to, 286 n.
Spratt, Bp. referred to, 75 n. 272 n. 591 n.
Stearne, Dr. Tractatus, 468 n. 517 n.
Stewart's Sermons, 586 n.
Stillingfleet, Bp. quoted, 249, 251, 362, 363, 394, 395, 425 n.
Stockton's, Owen, Life, 165 n. 277 n.
Stonehouse, Rev. Sir J. Sick Man's Assistant, 468 n. 516
Strong, Rev. W. referred to, 275 n.
Strype's Annals, 248 n.
Study, General, 44—67
 — of Scriptures, 68—81
 — University, 48, 88, 89
 — self-denial in, 169—173
Startevart's Works, 266 n.
Style of Sermons, 269, 270, 416—422
Success, Ministerial, 94—100
 — Desire of, 637—640
 — Mistakes in judging of, 96—98
 — Want of, 99, 100
 — Warrant of, 96, 231
Sumner's, Bp. of Chester, Apostolical Preaching, 335
 — Charge, 607 n. 647 n.
 — Evidences of Christianity, 49
 — Sermons, 30 n. 519
 — Bishop of Winchester's Charge, 473 n. 519 n. 521, 561 n. 584 n. 650 n.
 — Ministerial character of Christ, 97, 98, 139—141, 154, 209 n. 288, 289, 401 n. 406 n. 429, 641
- Sunday Schools. See Schools**
 — School Hymn Book, 526 n.
Supper, Lord's, Sacrament of, 582—585
Sympathies of our people, encouragement from, 28
Synopsis Purioris Theologiæ recommended, 555 n.
Syntagma Confessionum referred to, 53 n.
- T**
- Taylor, Bp. 10 n. 154 n. 177 n. 183, 209 n. 420, 421 n. 441**
 — Miss, Hymns, 526 n.
Teachers of Sunday School, 86, 529 533
 — Meetings, 532
 — Questioning Book, 529
Tenison, Abp. referred to, 588
Tertullian quoted, 249
Theophylact quoted, 208
Thorndike, Mr. quoted, 249, 250
Tillotson's Sermons, 272 n. 419 n.
Time, value of, 58—60
Timothy referred to, 35 n. 57, 88
Tindal quoted, 308
Topical Preaching, 380
Trent, Council of, 207 n. 251 n. 560
Trials of Ministry. See Ministry
Trinity, Doctrine of, 6, 354
- U**
- Unestablished Christian. See Christian**
Uses of the Ministry. See Ministry
Usher, Abp. referred to, 77 n. 262 n. 419 n. 435 n.
 — Body of Divinity quoted, 309
- V**
- Venn's, Rev. J. Sermons, 21 n.**
Virgil's Georgics, 466 n.
Visitation of the Sick. See Sick
Vitringa's Method. Homil. 37 n. 260, 271 n. 291, 368 n.
 — Observ. Sac. 296
 — Typ. Proph. 80 n.
- W**
- Waldenses' testimony on Confirmation, 554**
Walker's, Rev. R. Sermons, 368 n.
 — Rev. S. referred to, 131 n. 392, 312, 569, 600
Warburton's, Bp. Directions to Students, 427, 428
Ward's Coal from the Altar, 420, 422
Wardlaw, Rev. Dr. on Ecclesiastes quoted, 410, 411 n.
Warning Evangelical, importance of, 504, 505
Watts's Hymns, 526 n.
 — Questions on, 526 n.

- Watts's Improvement of the Mind, 62 n. 63 n. 271 n.
 ——— Revival, humble attempt at, 66, 148, 166 n. 267, 325, 326, 442 n. 466 n. 469
- Watts, Dr. Johnson's Life of, 171
- Weissman's *Historia Sacra*, 80, 81 n.
- Welsh, Rev. J. 657 n.
- Wesley, Rev. J. 286 n. 426
- Whateley, Rev. Dr. on Rhetoric quoted, 269, 270
- Wheatley, referred to, 554 n.
- Whitby's Commentary, 74
- White, H. K. quoted, 123 n. 421, 422 n. 441 n.
- Whitfield, 169 n. 223, 426, 446, 447 n.
- Wickliffe quoted, 83
- Wilkins, Bp. quoted, 62, 264, 285, 390, 419 n. 508
- Wilkes's, Rev. S. C. Essay, 170, 213, 214
- Willet, Dr. H. quoted, 81 n.
- Williams, Abp. referred to, 27 n.
 ——— Rev. D. on Ministerial Office, 31, 32
 ——— Dr. E. Christian Preacher, 172 n.
- Wilson's, Bp. Life, 183 n. 455 n. 461 n. 468 n. 478 n. 650 n.
 ——— Parochialia, 561 n. 632 n.
 ——— *Sacra Privata*, 10, 167 n. 169 n. 189 n. 422
 ——— Works, 272 n.
 ——— Rev. D. on Confirmation, 554 n.
 ——— Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, 157 n. 171, 172 n. 293 n. 464 n. 612

ERRATA

- Page 17, note 1, for 'de est' read 'deest'
 — 62, note 4, for 'Senaca,' read 'Seneca'
 — 365, line 5 from bottom, to 366, line 5 as a quotation.

